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*The 727<sup>th</sup>*  
*Railway Operating Battalion*  
*in World War II*





© Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.

UNITED STATES

Fort Dix, N.J.

Staten Island  
New York

Meridian, Miss.

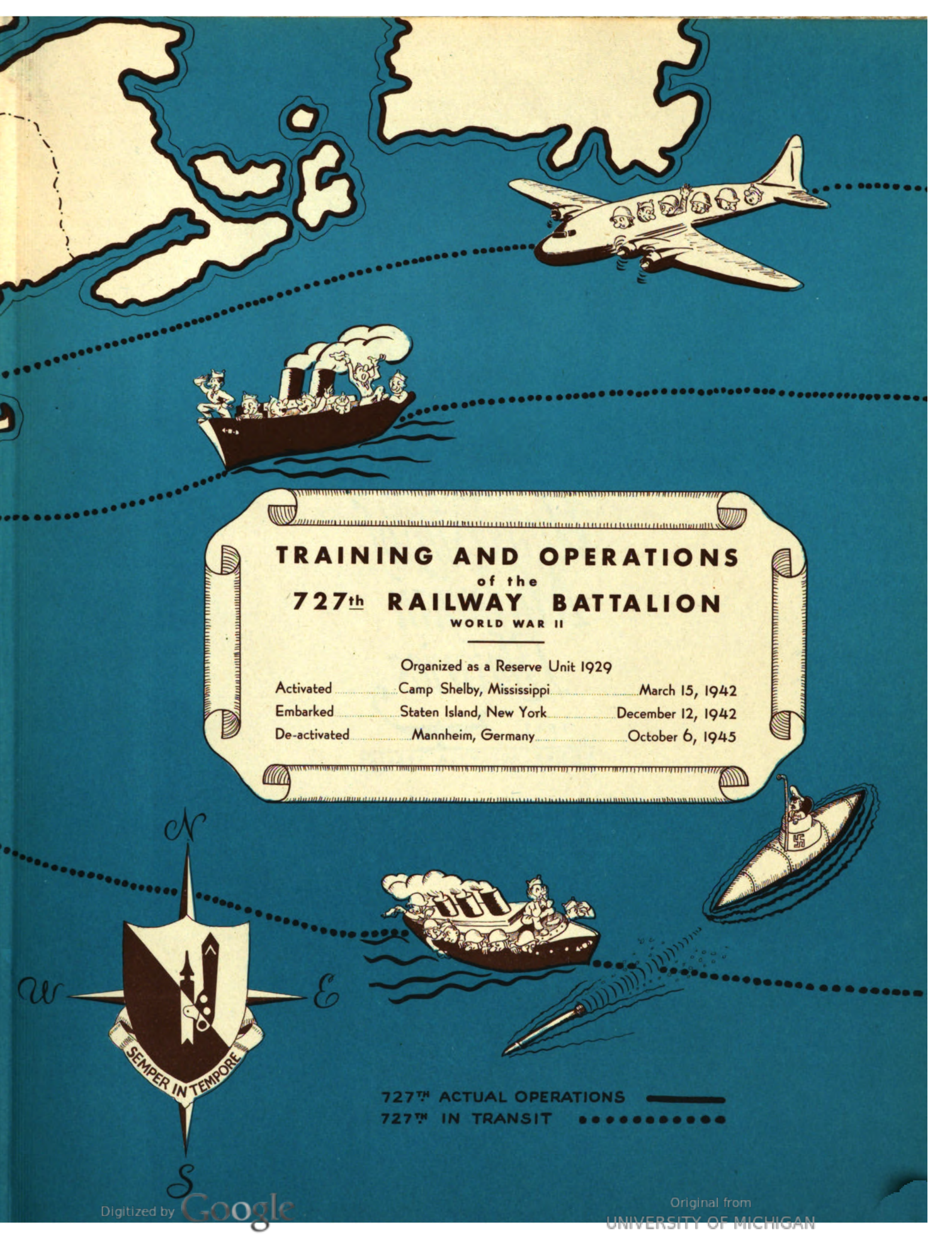
Camp Shelby  
Hattiesburg, Miss.

New Orleans, La.

ATLANTIC OCEAN

GULF OF MEXICO





**TRAINING AND OPERATIONS**  
of the  
**727<sup>th</sup> RAILWAY BATTALION**  
WORLD WAR II

Organized as a Reserve Unit 1929

Activated .....	Camp Shelby, Mississippi .....	March 15, 1942
Embarked .....	Staten Island, New York .....	December 12, 1942
De-activated .....	Mannheim, Germany .....	October 6, 1945

727<sup>th</sup> ACTUAL OPERATIONS —————

727<sup>th</sup> IN TRANSIT .....  
.....







*The 727th*  
**Railway Operating Battalion**  
*in World War II*







U.S. Army 727th Railway Operating Battalion

# *The 727th* **Railway Operating Battalion** *in World War II*



**SIMMONS-BOARDMAN PUBLISHING CORPORATION**  
**NEW YORK**



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## *Dedication*

This book, the historical record of our lives during World War II, is dedicated to those we will always remember—our friends and comrades who died for their belief that the liberty of their land and its people was worth the supreme sacrifice.

S/Sgt. Alfred E. Hurst

Pfc William S. Johnson

Pvt. Willard R. Kafton

Pvt. Harry S. Keith

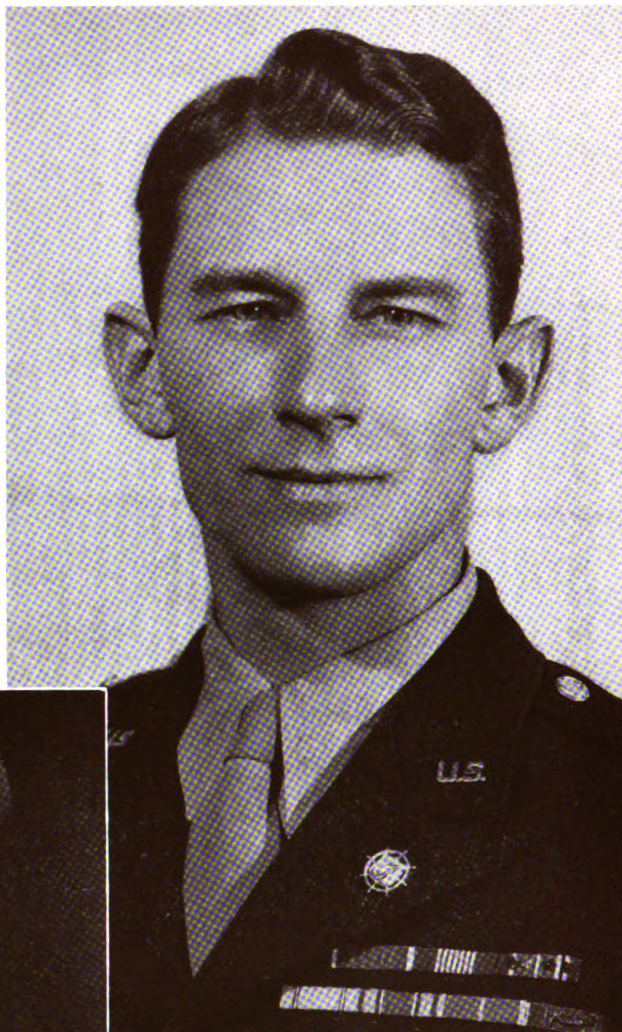
Pfc Christy Lepore

Sgt. Edward Smith

T/5 Francis Waldbillig

T/5 Richard L. Wittman

*Our  
Commanding  
Officers*



*Lt. Col. Frederick W. Okie (above), commanded the 727th from its activation until February, 1945, when he was transferred to the command of the 704th Railway Grand Division. In civilian life he was a superintendent on the Southern Railway. He is now president of the Union Railroad Company. Lt. Col. John M. Budd (left) was our CO from February, 1945, till the end of the war. Previously he was executive officer of the 704th Railway Grand Division. Before the war he was a superintendent on the Great Northern and is now president of the C. & E. I. Railroad.*



## *Foreword*

This is the historical and pictorial record of the 727th Railway Operating Battalion, Transportation Corps, Military Railway Service, of the Army of the United States, in the North African and European theatres of World War II. When the official chronicles are written, the pages devoted to the work of the 727th will, we believe, reflect the only glory that matters—duty well done.

From its peacetime beginnings on the drafting boards of the War Department's Tables of Organization, through its mobilization, training, travel and active service, the battalion upheld the great traditions of the nation. It was a typical American outfit and that is how it wishes to be remembered.

Its members wish to express their appreciation to the battalion's sponsor, the Southern Railway System, which in wartime service established a brilliant record. The Southern, at a difficult time, gave us its best instructors and enthusiastically supplied us with all of the necessary railroad equipment and facilities for our training. Many of its officers and employees, particularly those on its New Orleans and Northeastern Railroad, gave freely of their time and experience to help us achieve a well knit organization. Their practical assistance greatly helped us change from raw recruits to seasoned railroad soldiers.

These pages will recall to memory those of our comrades who lie in foreign lands through which we travelled. In our various civilian pursuits we will endeavor to help carry on their part of the great hope that wars between the nations will be ended, that all may live in peace.

Those of us who served in the ranks wish to express our sincere tribute and appreciation for the excellent leadership given by our commanding officers, who took as much pride in their men as their men did in them:

Lt. Col. Fred W. Okie

Lt. Col. John M. Budd

# *The Honor Roll*

The following military awards were given to members of our battalion for outstanding performance above and beyond the call of duty, or for wounds received as a result of enemy action.

## *Legion of Merit*



Lt. Col. Fred W. Okie	Africa
1st Lt. Victor E. Williams	Africa
1st Lt. August E. Hackman	Sicily
M/Sgt. Kenneth W. Phillips	Sicily
S/Sgt. John C. Browning	Sicily
S/Sgt. Allen C. Metzger	Sicily
T/4 John L. Denson	Sicily

## *Purple Heart*



T/5 Ernest O. Jefferson	Italy
T/5 Alexander J. Masti	Italy
Pfc John C. Long	Italy
Pfc George Rodak	Italy
Pvt. Harold E. Jordan	Italy
Pvt. Stanley Andruski	Italy
Pvt. Luther N. Turnage	Italy

## *Soldier's Medal*



Lt. Col. Fred W. Okie
Major Roy P. Moss
1st Lt. David M. Perkins
WO Daniel F. Baker
M/Sgt. Kenneth W. Phillips
M/Sgt. Malcolm H. Morris
T/Sgt. Norwood L. Stone

S/Sgt. Millard M. Bartlett
S/Sgt. Charles B. Swan
Sgt. Tony W. Lonero
Cpl. Joseph A. Canzoneri
Cpl. Lyman R. Baird, Jr.
Pfc Frederick R. Vogel
Pvt. James G. Healy

# *of Awards and Decorations*

## *Battalion Decorations*



(Left) North African-European Theater of Operations Ribbon with Seven Stars and Bronze Arrowhead. (Center) Occupation of Germany Ribbon for Members in Germany after May 8, 1945. (Right) National Defense Ribbon for All Members with 12 Months' Service in the United States.



(Left) Victory Ribbon for All Members. (Right) Good Conduct Medal for Those Qualified by Battalion Order.

## *Commendations*

- ☆ Battalion Citation for Operations in Africa, by Major General Carl R. Gray, Jr., M.R.S. Office of Director General, APO 512, dated 1 July 1943.
- ☆ Battalion Commendation by General George S. Patton, Seventh Army, A.F. Hq., APO 512, 12 September 1943, for Operations in Sicily.
- ☆ Commendation to Company "A" for Rehabilitation of Track Supporting the U.S. Fifth Army, A.F. Hqs. M.R.S., O.D.G., APO 400, dated 30 July 1944.
- ☆ Commendation of Chief of Transportation, AFHQ, for Clearance of Tonnage, Port of Naples, AF Hqs. M.R.S., O.D.G., dated 24 April 1944.
- ☆ Special Meritorious Service, Fifth Army Plaque, awarded to M.R.S. Hqs. by Fifth Army, dated 14 April 1944, for Operations in Italy.
- ☆ Battalion Commendation from Lt. General Jacob L. Devers, Commanding Sixth Army Group, for work in France.







# U. S. A.

## ORGANIZATION, ACTIVATION AND TRAINING

### *Birth of a Military Brain Child*

**O**CTOBER, 1929, was an interesting month in an eventful year. In Wall Street the stock market had another relapse after a big break. People were still talking about the world flight of the big German airship, the *Graf Zeppelin*. President Hoover had proclaimed the Kellogg-Briand Anti-War Treaty in effect, under which 62 nations pledged themselves to renounce war as an instrument of national policy. In this peaceful atmosphere Mr. Harry A. DeButts of the Southern Railway, leaned back in his official chair one morning and dictated a letter which began: *Gentlemen: Vice President Miller has been requested by the War Department to organize a Railway Battalion . . .* At the time it seemed a matter of small importance.

Mr. DeButts, now Vice President of Operations on the Southern, proceeded with the organization of the reserve 594th Engineer Battalion, Railway Operating. This was the parent organization of what became the 727th Railway Operating Battalion, Transportation Corps. The insignia of the 727th, with its red and white shield, officially reflects the Corps of Engineers background.

To 836 men who were called up in World War II to fill the battalion's ranks, the letter

written on October 19th, 1929, at Greensboro, North Carolina, subsequently became of historic importance. It marked the beginning of



*The station at Fort Northeastern, Hattiesburg, Mississippi where our headquarters was located in 1942.*

## *Some Familiar Scenes from Our Training Days*



*The officers of the 727th in training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, early in 1942.*

*GI and civilian dispatchers working side by side at Hattiesburg during our training in 1942.*



what became officially known as the 727th Railway Operating Battalion of the Army of the United States.

During the '30's there was little history to record. The battalion's story properly begins two anxious months after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. On February 16, 1942, a small group of officers were sent to the Engineer Replace-

ment Training Center at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, for refresher training. A month later they were sent to Camp Shelby, Mississippi, one of the South's largest training camps.

The officers were shown a stand of heavy timber, in front of which were piles of lumber. They were handed a blueprint and told that here the 727th would be housed. Construction





*A welcome chow after completing a run on the civilian railway at Fort Northeastern, Hattiesburg.*



*On the job instruction in repairing bridges on the New Orleans and North Eastern RR. between Hattiesburg and New Orleans.*



*Battalion men repairing track along the New Orleans and North Eastern right of way near Hattiesburg in the summer of '42.*



*The boys learning to improve their marksmanship on the rifle range.*

## *On the Range*



*Open-air chow-line on the rifle range—and mighty good chow, too, after hugging an M-1 all day.*

work went forward rapidly. Trees went down, buildings went up, roads appeared.

On March 20th the first detachment of 27 men arrived from Camp Claiborne, with M/Sgt. Claude Golden heading them as the first Sergeant Major. News of the new railway unit soon spread and many inquiries and applications from officers and men who wished to

soldier with it began coming in.

Technical training of the battalion began in April on the New Orleans and Northeastern Railroad. As fast as new arrivals were processed they were detailed as trackmen, bridgemen, trainmen, enginemen, shopmen, operators and dispatchers. Every detail involved in the smooth operation of a good railroad division



was studied in the best place for it—right out on the road. From the nation's 225,000-mile steel network came first-class men who averaged 5.3 years of railroading experience and were ready to put it to military use.

In the entire U. S. Army at the time there were probably not more than five fully trained dispatchers. The 727th had two of the best: M/Sgt. John Carlin and T/Sgt. James M. Ruggles. Capt. Miles G. Stevens ranked the

The Southern Railway Company, as god-father to the 727th, helped with the training program in various ways. It furnished an office car and 21 camp cars for our use. When the auxiliary camp at Hattiesburg was given the name of "Fort Northeastern," the Southern donated the flagpole and flag.

May was full of confusion until the 15th, when Headquarters, Military Service, was activated. Up to that time, the battalion was oper-



*"Officers' Mess" on the range. There's still room on the hood for one more.*

battalion in experience. He had been a master mechanic on the western lines of the Southern and had 31 years' service behind him.

There was no time to waste. Company "C" sent its first train crew out on road training April 20th. Headquarters and Service Company had already installed some operators and dispatchers in strategic offices along the road. To make sure that everyone would know that he was really "in the army now" a guard mount was started and a formal inspection of quarters held. By the end of April the new battalion was able to turn out about 180 men for duty.

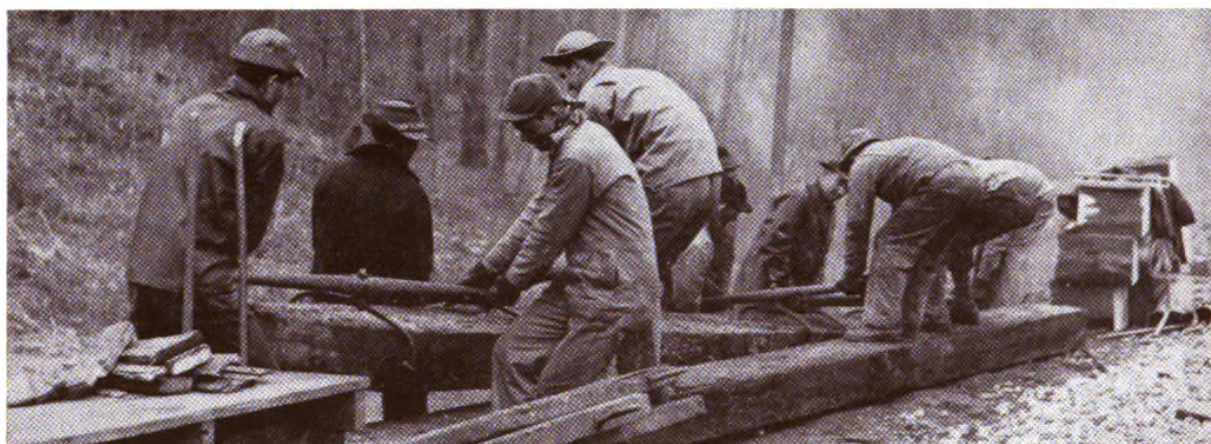
ating under four different commands, and keeping up with paper work was a real job. In addition, the battalion was earmarked for cadre training duties. Training in basic military subjects was stepped up, although equipment—a problem throughout the Army just then—was a very real difficulty in our battalion. Condemned ambulances, and trucks with inadequate lights and questionable brakes were utilized. But morale was high—very high—and it continued to remain that way.

Personnel changed almost constantly in the next few months. Nearly two-thirds of Com-





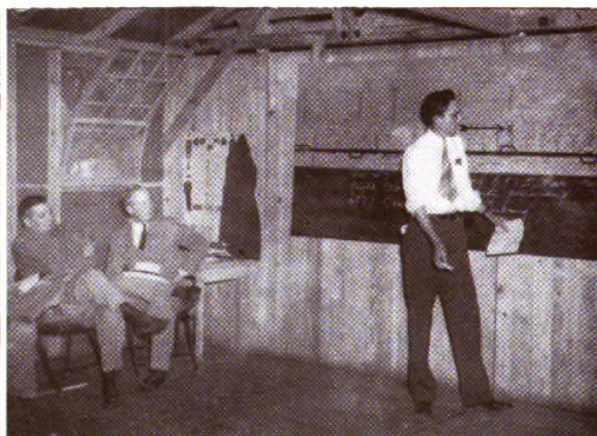
*The first crews ready to start out on their road training.*



*Co. "A" men in field training at Hattiesburg.*

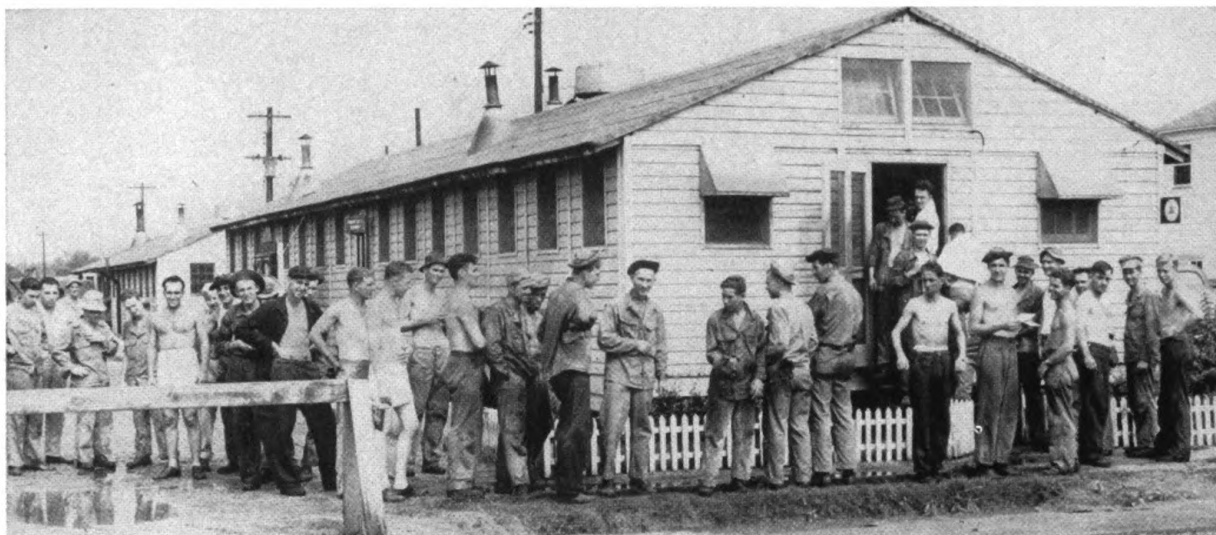


*Minor repairs on the trucks of a freight car.*



*Eric Dunbar conducts a class in train rules.*





*Lining up for an inspection by the ever curious, ever vigilant medics.*

pany "C's" personnel were transferred from the battalion to form the 761st Railway Transportation Company. The 727th also furnished cadre for the 760th Diesel Shop Battalion and the 759th Railway Operating Battalion, in addition to troops for the 753rd Railway Shop Battalion and other special cadre. During this initial period, more than 2,500 troops passed through the outfit—enough to form a good-sized armored regiment. There were 847 men who remained to form the 727th—most of whom stayed with

the battalion and helped to create its fine record.

There were many interesting sidelights during this formative period—some forgotten. Others are destined to remain forever green in memory.

Company "B" received a pat on the back from Col. Carl R. Gray, Jr., head of the Military Railway Service, for what he called their "superior" mess hall. "If the sanitation of an area can be taken as a measure of the morale of the troops

*First we derailed this one, then rerailed it for practice.*







*Hup, two, three, four! Co. "B" singing on a hike. Note those sweat-soaked shirts.*



*Co. "B," somewhat the worse for wear, taking the last 10-minute break on a hike.*

*The commendation at the right was given us by Gen. Gray during our training period. It gave those weeks of spit and polish, drill and marching more meaning for us.*

*Major General Carl R. Gray, Jr., (left, below) our well-loved and much-honored Commanding General, is shown here with Clark Hungerford II and other visiting officers reviewing the battalion's first parade. Gen. Gray frequently witnessed our early training activities. Later he was in command of the military railroad situation in all theatres in which we operated. Before being called to active duty he was Executive Vice President of the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railroad, with headquarters in St. Paul, Minnesota. He is now Administrator of Veterans' Affairs.*

ENGINEER HEADQUARTERS  
MILITARY RAILWAY SERVICE  
Office of the General Manager

In reply refer to 323.03-1 (727th)

615 Commerce Building  
St. Paul, Minnesota  
September 26, 1942

Subject: Inspection

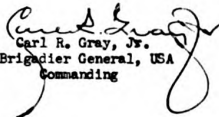
To: Commanding Officer  
727th Engr Ry Opr Bn  
Camp Shelby, Miss.

Personal

1. Basic training inspection of your battalion was made at Camp Shelby and Meridian by officers of this headquarters Sept. 15, 1942, and report has been rendered to me indicating the results of that inspection, which are gratifying and which is pleasing.

2. For your satisfaction, it is reported that your battalion as a unit has completed its basic military training in a very satisfactory manner and that in most of your important subjects you have been generally rated excellent. Recommendation is that additional time need only be used in improvement of musketry, service of security, and explosives and demolitions.

3. It is pleasing to get such a report of the tactical inspection made of your unit and it is the Commanding General's desire and pleasure to congratulate the officers and men of your command. It is unnecessary for me to add, but I do so, that it is also his belief that you will continue your battalion in that same state of readiness to perform the mission of an operating battalion in any theater of operations.

  
Carl R. Gray, Jr.  
Brigadier General, USA  
Commanding



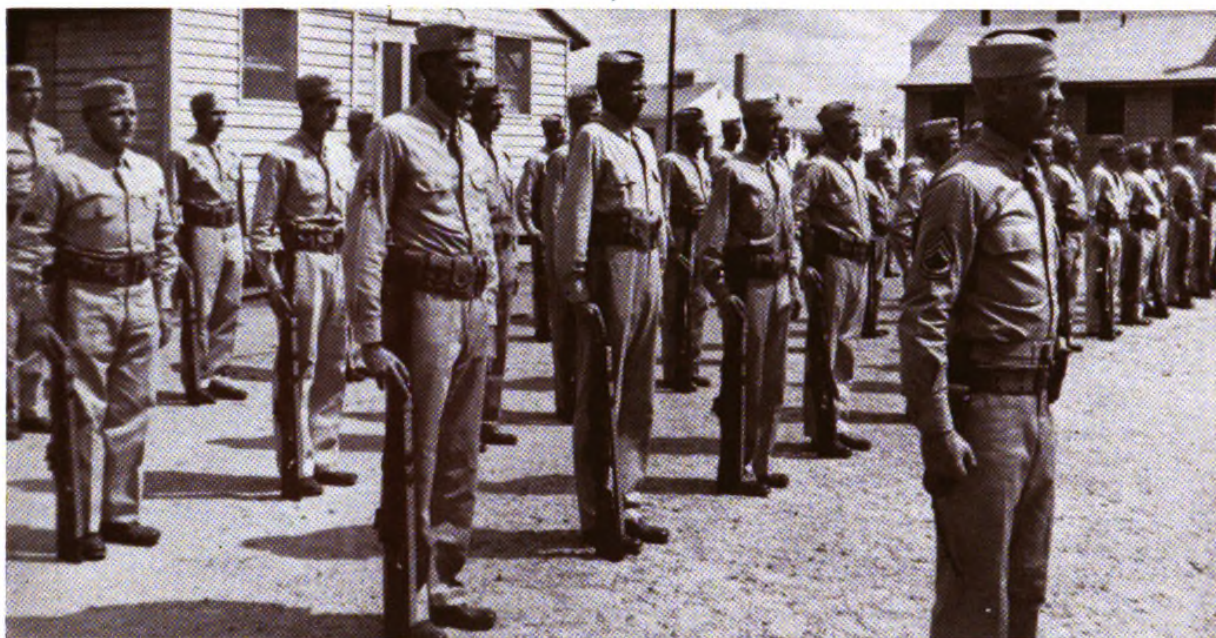
occupying it, the morale of this company must be high indeed," the citation read.

Because of this citation Capt. Miles Green Stevens, 1st Sgt. John P. Dennis and their men felt quite proud of themselves.

On July 1st the battalion took its first extended march under full field packs. Nearly every man came back to camp in good shape, except for "chigger" bites received during the ten-minute rest periods along the route. Company "A," practical as always, leveled off a full-dress parade ground as part of supplementary training in the operation of bulldozers and army shovels—M-1.

Small-arms firing practice and qualification





*Co. "B" standing inspection before barracks at Key Field, Meridian, Miss., 1942.*



*Inspection at Camp Shelby.*

firing was held in late August, after the battalion received a tentative alert order. September 29th our battalion lined up to take a good look at the man who was in charge of the whole vast job of winning a war which we had not started, but in which we were now fully committed. That was the day President Franklin D. Roosevelt inspected camp in his quick tour through the training areas of the South.

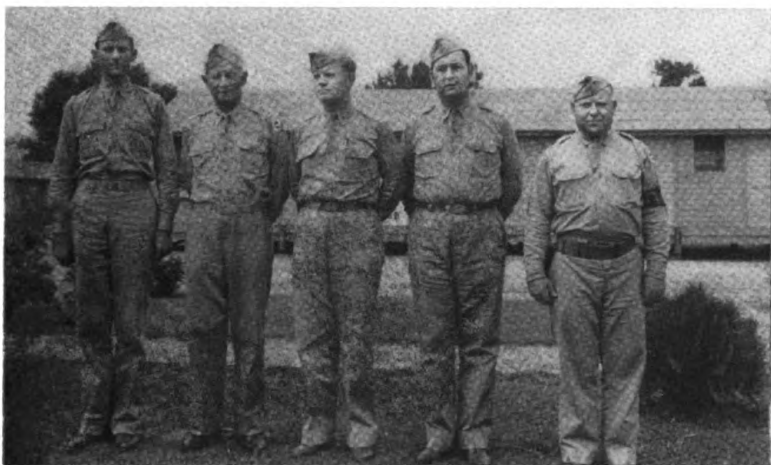
On November 7th the War Department announced that a task force had landed at numerous points on the North African coast under the direction of Lt. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower. This electrifying news spread rapidly through

camp and over the road we were operating. This was *it!* The first dent had been made. Would we be a part of it—or would we be only “listening in” while history was being made?

For those who asked this question the answer came almost at once. Two days later the 727th, “at existing strength,” officers and enlisted men, was ordered “to proceed to Port of Embarkation, Brooklyn, New York.” The order could have left no doubt, but in case there was any, this line appeared almost at the order’s end: “Dependents will not accompany troops.”

It looked as if we would be in the war—and fast . . .

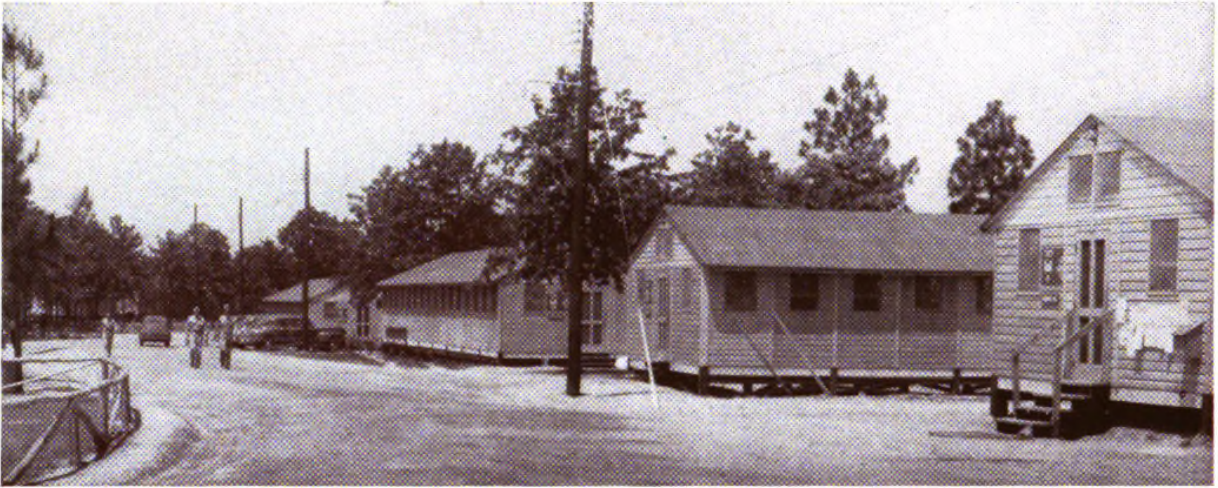




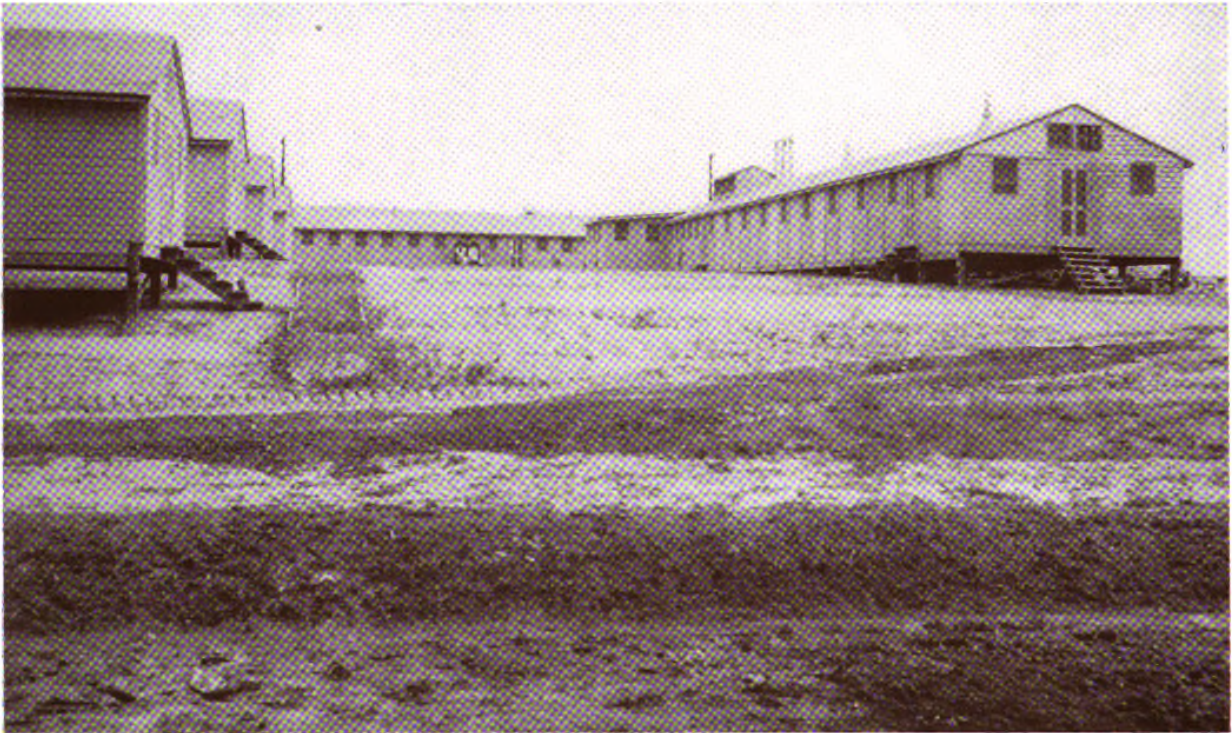
*Col. Okie, Capt. Stevens, Lts. Cary, Shelton and Norris of Co. "B" at Key Field . . . Capt. Wittekind, Major Moss, Col. Okie, Lt. Mauney at Camp Shelby . . . Some of the men of Co. "B" relaxing after work call at Key Field . . . More of Co. "B" at Key Field . . . Capt. Osborn, Battalion Medical officer.*







*(Top) A view of the Co. "B" area at Key Field . . . (Bottom) Co. "A's" area at Camp Shelby.*



We had eighteen days to get ready. In that time garrison property was turned in, pack equipment issued, medical checkups made, final furloughs granted, passenger lists compiled, crating and boxing completed and final good-

byes said. We congratulated M/Sgt. Baker, T/Sgt. Hunter and Cpl. Weaver, all of whom passed their exams—and stiff ones they were—for Warrant Officer, Junior Grade.

On November 20th we pulled out behind





## *Shoving off*

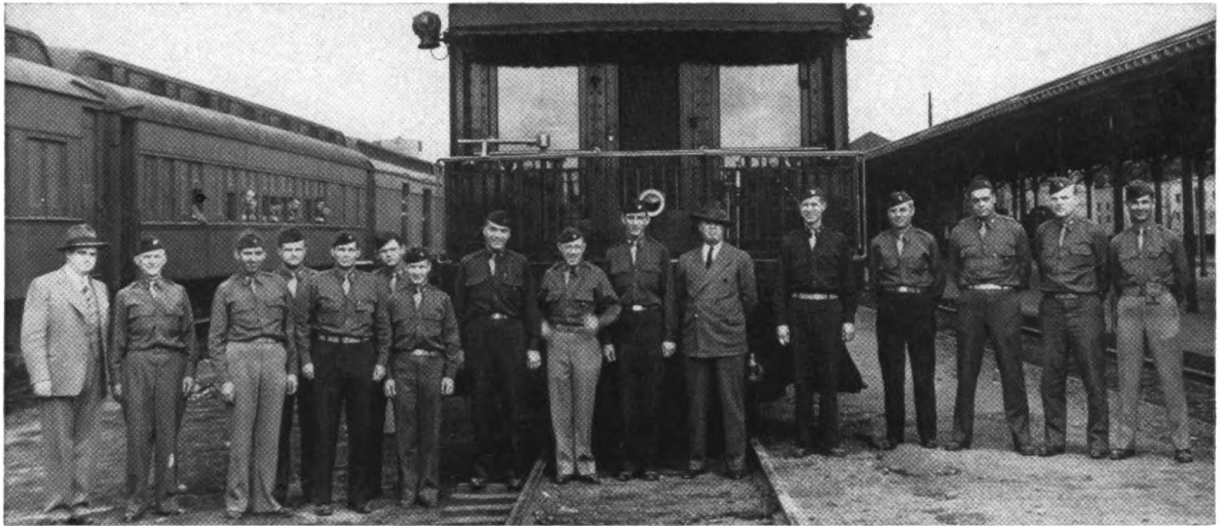
(Top to bottom) Loading up the 761st Transportation Co. for its last ride from Camp Shelby, 1942 (The personnel were furnished from our outfit.) . . . Our train pulling out of Hattiesburg for POE, Fort Dix . . . The train crew lines up to say goodbye (l to r) Lt. Cabra, Pfc Keegen, Sgt. Reese, T/4 Guard, Pvt. Carter, Ltd. Hickey, Clark Hungerford (Gen. Mgr., Southern RR.), Sgt. Quillen and the civilian crew.



(Right) The hour of departure for POE from Camp Shelby . . . Taking exercise somewhere in Pennsylvania, enroute to POE.



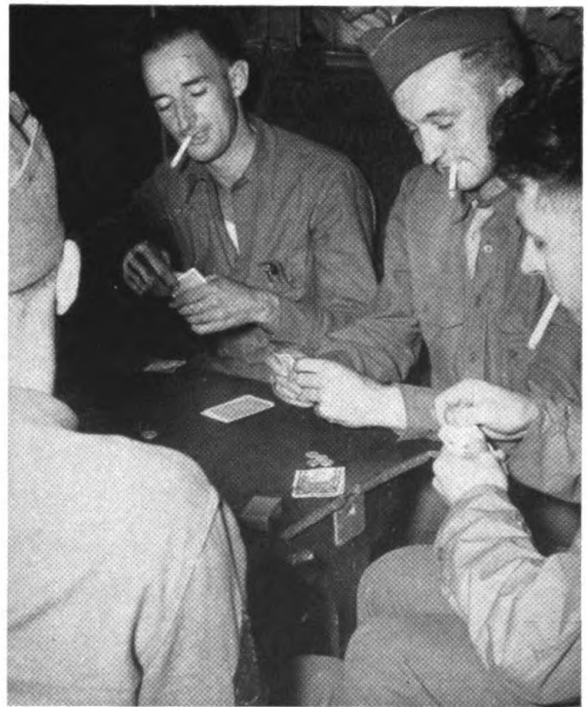




*Southern Railway officials and some 727th officers before our departure for overseas.*

Southern Railway engine No. 727 with engineer Sgt. Willard M. Quillian and conductor Sgt. John H. Reese hauling the first train, which carried battalion personnel from Hattiesburg. Three trains did the transport job, two from Camp Shelby and one from Key Field. Our sponsor, the Southern Railroad, did much to make the trip as pleasant as possible. We were accompanied as far as Washington by two of the road's officials, Mr. Morris Stewart, Superintendent of Motive Power, and Mr. Clark Hungerford, General Manager. The latter was one of the men who, in 1929, had been selected to set up the battalion which evolved into the 727th.

After the heat of Southern summer, winter at Fort Dix, New Jersey, was no bargain. Compared with the warmth of barracks or an office down the tracks, tents were not too much appreciated. But the inconveniences were soon forgotten in the excitement of preparing for the long trip overseas. After two days in Dix we were pretty well set up, and the business of staging was begun. During the month, we worked to get ready. Many of us received 24-hour leaves, and on one of them, Sgt. Mannion of Company "C" was given permission to take 48 instead of



*Wooing Lady Luck enroute to POE.*

24. For this was an important occasion—the sergeant planned to get married, and did, with many of his C Company buddies attending the ceremony.

During our stay at Dix we also located seven of our yardmasters and operators who had been sent out from the battalion several months earlier to Fort Hamilton, where they had apparently been misplaced in the early rush to get men overseas. We wanted them back. Upon application to the Commanding Officer of the New York Port of Embarkation, Sergeants A. J. Moxley, Melvin E. Miller, W. Farrel, W. J. Husting, Millard M. Bartlett and Joseph C. Cravey were transferred back to the 727th. It's worth remembering that at least two of these men were destined to receive special recognition for outstanding service overseas.

On December 10th, the waiting period ended. Our battalion, which ten months before had started with a handful of officers, equipped with a set of blueprints, at a camp of which few of us had ever heard, was now boarding a ship for an unknown destination. Only the tall towers of New York, and the Statue of Liberty, shining in the morning mist, saw us leave for overseas and whatever fortunes of war awaited us there.

We were ready for them.

#### OVER THE BOUNDING MAIN

Guessing started shortly after we steamed out of New York, and started across the grey Atlantic for an unknown port. Which port was the big question.

The guessing didn't last long, at least not during the first part of the voyage. The old Atlantic was having one of its winter tantrums. Four days of continuous rough weather sent a good many of us to our bunks with seasickness as Sgt. M. Morris of "H & S" and Sgt. F. A. Walker of

Company "A," who were particularly kind to the fish, could well testify. On the fifth day the weather cleared, and the voyage became more enjoyable, marred only by two sub alerts. The sound of the sub doors closing deep down in the holds of the three ships on which we were passengers brought the war very close.

On Christmas Eve, near midnight, we learned more about our destination. It was a beautiful warm night with a full moon. On deck the chaplain was holding a Christmas Eve mass. The lights of Ceuta, Spanish Morocco, the first unshielded lights we had seen in eleven days, appeared on our starboard. The Rock of Gibraltar, ghostly in a halo of mist, was on our port. It was all so beautiful and awe-inspiring that we were deeply impressed. We were thinking of home. Then we became aware that our black ships on a silvery sea made us sitting ducks for a waiting submarine.

We now knew where we were going. We were sailing into the Mediterranean Sea, which Benito Mussolini, in his balmier days, was so fond of calling *Mare Nostrum*. The day after Christmas we docked at Mers El Kebir, near Oran, Algeria, and marched down the gang plank in a cold, intermittent rain.

The 727th arrived the day after General Eisenhower became Supreme Commander of the Anglo-American invasion forces. On the same day the great German battleship *Scharnhorst* was sunk off Norway, and the assassination of Admiral Darlan made front page headlines in the world press. Busy as we were preparing for the big job ahead we took time out to tune in on the big news.



**Lines operated by the 727<sup>th</sup>**





# *North Africa*

## OUR MOST SPECTACULAR OPERATION

### *On-The-Job Training*

WHOEVER coined the phrase about the African desert being "a tactician's paradise but a quartermaster's hell" hit it right on the button. That's what we found the Sahara to be.

We had landed at a crucial time. The British Eighth Army, which had made a name for itself at El Alamein, was attacking and driving Rommel westward from Egypt through Libya. In a bold stroke that had made the world catch its breath, and Hitler ponder a little more uneasily about the invincibility of his "Master Race," the Allies invaded North Africa on November 8th, landing at Casablanca, Oran and Algiers. After a few nominal skirmishes, the French came over to our side. Still new on the "Dark Continent," our forces had not landed sufficient supplies and men to push the advance through to Tunis. By January, 1943, the Allies were in complete control of North Africa from Casablanca to a line just east of Constantine, Tebessa and Gafsa, and it was to this area that the 727th was sent.

All of this didn't develop overnight. Upon disembarking at Oran, we were informed that our housekeeping and operating equipment had been unloaded at Casablanca, 500 miles west and weeks away. But we met good and old friends at Oran, the 761st Railway Transportation Com-

pany, which fed us and helped us to find quarters. It was at Oran that we discovered that pup tents were fine for maneuvers in the States, but that garages, stables, theatres and abandoned railway coaches were better fitted for North Africa's winter weather.

Mixed up or not, there was work to do almost immediately. The battalion was split up into small detachments. "A" Company got two jobs: assisting French civilian railways to maintain trackage, and constructing a few depots for Army Engineers. Most of "C" Company went to work in a QM depot, but some of its men acted as highway traffic officers as far away as Oujda.

We found that our men who originally had been sent out as special troops from Company "B" were wasting good railroad talents in an ordnance outfit. Upon application to Base Headquarters we managed to have them returned to our battalion. It seemed to us at the time that all the training we had been given had not been worth the time and effort.

On January 19, 1943, the 727th Railway Operating Battalion assumed responsibility for the operation of the meter-gauge railroad lines in eastern Algeria and Tunisia. At that time it was the plan of SHAEF to build up a big supply

base at Tebessa. The Americans had a small reconnaissance force at Gafsa and were operating patrols in western Tunisia. The Germans and Italians had similar forces, but as the country was wide open and the number of troops

in Rommel's rear while the British Eighth Army was driving him westward. The two Allied armies might then be able to destroy the famous German desert army in the vicinity of Sfax.

The CO had been far up ahead doing reconnaissance near the front. When he returned, the future became clear. Something big was brewing east of Tebessa, and the battalion was to have a good deal to do with the success or failure of the advance. The Americans could not build up a strong force until there were sufficient sup-



(Top) This was our camp at Ouled Rhamoun . . . Tebessa—last rail terminal to the front during the Kasserine Pass operation, January-March, 1943.

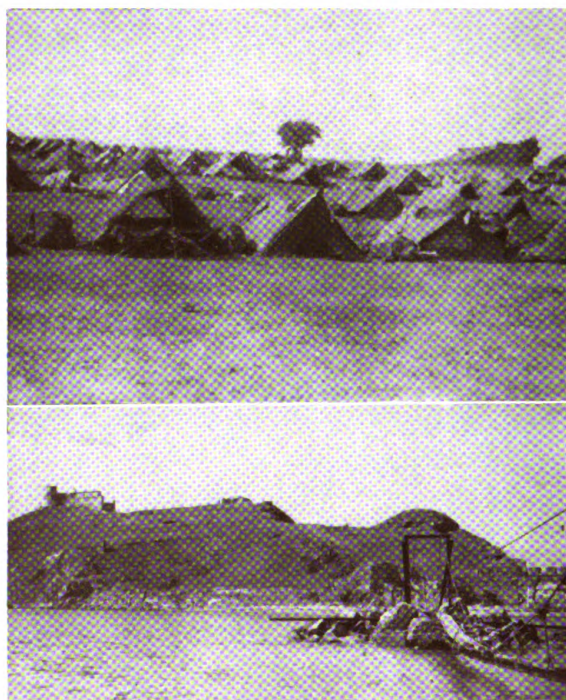
limited, there was little actual contact and no well-defined front lines.

The Americans had hoped to make a dash to the coast; that is, to the Gulf of Gabes, cutting the line of communication between the German and Italian armies near Tunis, and preventing



Where Co. "A" slept the first night on African soil. Other companies were not so fortunate.

their uniting with Rommel's army, which was retreating westward through Lybia. The Americans hoped to build up quickly a strong force



(Above) The staging area at Tabarka, Tunisia . . . (Below) Looking toward the Pirates' Castle, Tabarka.

plies in the semiarid desert area around Tebessa to sustain several divisions.

The 727th was assigned to transport these supplies to the base at Tebessa and to supply by railroad a thrust to the coast, as there were practically no highways over which supplies could be carried. All this depended on time and Rommel could easily guess the American plan. Therefore, it was good strategy on his part to strike the Americans at Tebessa and Gafsa and destroy





*Agha yard, Algiers, Algeria. The famous African city was west of our area of operations.*

their supplies before they could build up sufficient force to endanger his rear. The American force at Gafsa knew that Rommel would anticipate their plans and tried vainly to secure additional troops. For reasons best known to the supreme command no help was sent and so it appeared probable that Rommel would force the Americans to retreat from Gafsa.

But this is getting ahead of our story. Meanwhile, Capt. Carrol C. Mullen, Capt. Harold C. Mauney, Lt. James G. Beard, and Sgts. W. S. Ward, V. F. Hoster, and D. C. Proctor were sent ahead as an advance party. Morale improved immediately. On January 21st we arrived at Tebessa and started learning the road on all the narrow gauge lines. Part of Company "A" and



*Extensive Roman ruins we saw at Tebessa, Algeria.*



ten train crews and operators went on to Thelepte to be ready to assist any forward movement— a move which did not come off.

Colonel Okie's field notes reveal some of the

dition, and 25% of all locomotives fail before making a round trip. The local French railway admits that had this Organization not assisted, that operation would have



(Above) Co. "A" area, Tabarka, Tunisia . . . (Below) The mess tent in Ain Beida yard, March, 1943. Lt. Hodges in the foreground is coming to mess.

work we had to do, and what we had to work with:

. . . the motive power [on the Ouled Rhamoun-Tebessa line] is in terrible con-

dition, and 25% of all locomotives fail before making a round trip. For instance, the shop at Tebessa had only 18 mechanics of all types to work on locomotives. Company "B" has replaced more than 250 boiler



## *The Germans Left These for Us*



*Nos. 1 and 2 bridges (l to r) east of Kasserine Pass after German retreat, March, '43. A  $\frac{3}{4}$ -mi. "shoo fly" was built around No. 1.*



*(Top) No. 3 bridge, Kasserine Pass, double span, March, 1943 . . . (Bottom) Close-up of frog demolition at Thelepte. Retreating Nazis destroyed all frogs at every station.*





*(Above) This Co. "A" truck was strafed on "Messerschmitt Lane," the highway between Thelepte and Gafsa. The Nazis got 12 trucks and seven men, but none of the casualties were ours. Iden Cornwell, driver, and Love . . . (Below) The Nazis destroyed vital water supplies, like this tank and treating plant at Kasserine.*

tubes and has given two engines Class 3 repairs. Much of the material that is used, such as packing, is of such poor grade that it has to be continually replaced . . . Also, the first priority supplies and tools of this

Organization are just arriving, and it is expected that 70% of the supplies will have arrived by 1 March. [They never arrived.]

At the end of January, the 727th knew what it was like to be under fire—and strafing fire at



that. The II Army Corps was active in the Sbeitla-Gafsa area. Company "A's" B & B platoon, with two crews from Company "C," moved into Gafsa by truck. On the road going into town, a German fighter came down through the clouds, strafing seven trucks in the convoy, and killing seven soldiers—none of them, however, from our battalion.

At Gafsa, the party secured a French locomotive and went out on track reconnaissance, moving 17 miles east of Gafsa where the tactical situation up front stopped further advance. February 3rd, Engineers J. O. Ling and J. L. Stump drew one of the trickiest assignments in our railroad work in North Africa. In the engine house at Sened there were six dead engines, 14 cars of ammo, one coach and one boxcar that were to be moved back to Gafsa. Capt. Edwin B. Connerat decided that the only way to get those engines out was to pull them out by means of a cable. His crews used a winch on a four-ton truck for the job—a field expedient that did the trick. Faced with heavy grades, and using only a small engine for the job, Ling and Stump hauled the big load of dead locomotives, ammo, and odd cars back to Gafsa, and then on to Metlaoui, drawing for themselves and their unit a verbal commendation from Col. Frederick B. Butler, II Corps, who was in charge of the Gafsa area.

On February 8th we took over complete operation and maintenance from the French civilians at Tebessa and suffered our first direct street bombing attack. We built up tonnage movements to more than 1,400 net tons daily from the rear of Tebessa, and to between 600 and 800 tons toward the front, plus troop and hospital trains. Equipment was in very bad shape, and the 122-mile run from Ouled Rhamoun to Tebessa, for example, took a good 40 hours to run.

Two Diesel jobs picked up at the phosphate mines near Le Kuif helped a great deal. It was not until near the end of the North African campaign that the first shipments of GI locomotives

arrived. To add to our difficulties, old telephone lines were either cut or failing constantly, giving Headquarters and Service Company men a real run for their money as Sgts. G. W. Nethers and D. C. Proctor could testify. "C" rations were the food mainstay, with pork and beans taking precedent, for most of us, over the beef and vegetable stew. Food was eaten on the run, or in our pup tents that were spotted in and around the cactus patches.

The first three weeks of February were not only tense and crucial for the 727th; they were memorable for the entire II Army Corps, which we were helping to support on General Rommel's left flank. For suddenly, in early February, the "Desert Fox" threw Panther and Tiger tanks of his 21st and 22nd Panzer Divisions in our direction in an attempted break-through that came close to success. Both the Kasserine Pass and the supply base at Tebessa were threatened. We received orders to do our level best to salvage all engines and equipment from capture before the enemy reached Sened, Gafsa, Redeyef and Sbeitla. This had to be done to save the future striking power of the II Corps.

Everyone, from our CO down, will remember some vivid experience from this phase of the campaign for the rest of his life. On Sunday afternoon, February 14th, the CO of the 727th received a telephone call to come to Gafsa at once and bring enough men to run several trains. This sounded like the real thing. Col. Okie, Lt. Sterling, Lt. Norris, Lt. Howie, and 25 men from Company "C" drove to Gafsa. Lt. Williams of the B & B platoon, Company "A," was stationed at Gafsa in charge of repairing bombed track, preparatory to supporting an American thrust to the coast should our forces again attempt this move.

At 8:00 P.M. the Commanding Officer of the American forces at Gafsa held a staff meeting and announced that the American troops would evacuate Gafsa by midnight. The evacuation was to be made in the utmost secrecy. This created a terrific problem for the 727th because

*Some of the Men Who 'Went to Work' on the Axis*





(Top, l to r, p. 24) Joe Gunther and George Hellbrand, Co. "C," and George Pretty, Co. "B," ready to go to Khenchela from Ain Beida . . . An outstanding crew in Africa: J. Swander, engineer; R. Thompson, conductor; B. Carlquist, fireman; C. Cargo, brakeman; T. H. Owen, flagman . . . Scott and "Jackass Jake," bought from an Arab for a dollar at Tebessa, Algeria . . . Some officers in Africa: Hall, Moore, Perkins, Stancil, Patterson, Petterson, Voorheis (in locomotive cab) . . . Lt. Howie, Engr. Swander and Conductor Thompson looking over train orders at Tebessa . . . Flagman Owens on the rear of a train, Ain Fakroun. (P. 25, Top.) Operator and crew caller at Tebessa yard office . . . Warehouse office personnel, Constantine . . . Lt. Hackman supervising train movements, Tebessa to Gafsa . . . Yardmaster Lt. Hickey and operators, Ouled Rhamoun . . . CWO Baker riding a "hot" trainload of gasoline near Tebessa.





*1st Sgt. Walker and Capt. Boles at Co. "A" headquarters, Tebessa.*

the railroad through Gafsa was still privately owned and had not been requisitioned by the French Army and was, therefore, not under the control of the military.

Three engines were commandeered and fired up. Lt. Howie and his detachment of Company "C" went by truck to Metlaoui, the main terminal of the Sfax-Gafsa Railroad, to evacuate the engines and cars. There had been very little railroad traffic on this line because coal was almost unobtainable. The engines were cold and had to be fired up. The only trail to Metlaoui passed through Gafsa, and it was necessary to instruct Lt. Howie to send his truck back as soon as he arrived in Metlaoui. He and his men understood that they would have to get out of Metlaoui by railroad; otherwise they would be cut off and captured by the Germans. It was during this operation that one of our trucks, driven by Pvt. E. M. Barnhardt, became our first

truck battle casualty between Gafsa and Metlaoui.

There was terrific confusion at Gafsa as the French Army decided to move a detachment of Senegalese and Ghoume troops and all remaining mules by railroad. No one had anticipated this movement and it was a comical as well as an exasperating experience to watch the Ghoumes load their stubborn mules in the tiny French boxcars. The Americans had to load 290 tons of artillery ammunition which they could not afford to leave. There were not sufficient troops to load this ammunition so the 727th had to do this also. Finally, at 2:45 A.M., or two hours and forty-five minutes after the combat troops had left town, the last train pulled out of Gafsa.

Lt. Howie and his detachment from Company "C" reported by telephone that they were having good success in firing up the engines they found in Metlaoui. At first, the French civilians at Metlaoui were very hostile to the Americans, thinking they had come to steal their engines. When they learned that Gafsa was being evacuated, everyone went to work and helped.

There was also confusion on the highways between Thelepte and Gafsa. Conflicting orders had been issued with the result that the rear lines were stationed ahead of the front-line combat troops. To complete the rout, at daybreak Monday morning the Germans came over and strafed the highways and railroads. The first train out of Metlaoui was strafed about 15 miles south of Thelepte.

Lt. Howie and his group had done a marvelous job, starting eight trains out of Metlaoui which to all intents and purposes would have evacuated all the important railroad equipment, troops, and personnel in that sector. The railroad from Metlaoui to Thelepte runs through a rough, semiarid, sparsely settled country. There were a number of large bridges and several tunnels on this line. About 25 miles south of Thelepte the railroad crossed a long masonry viaduct at S'Bou Bakar. For some unknown rea-



son, a detachment of United States Engineers blew up 29 spans of this viaduct, effectively cutting our lines so that all the equipment leaving Metlaoui was blocked behind this long bridge.

The "C" Company men who found the bridge destroyed, returned the trains to the side tracks at Henchir and placed the train of ammunition in a railroad tunnel so it could not be discovered from the air by the Germans. The 25 Company "C" men were effectively cut off and, since they did not have sufficient transportation, could only get out of Metlaoui and Henchir on foot. Two officers of the 727th drove cross-country in a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -ton truck, located the men in Henchir, and arranged for additional battalion trucks to come and evacuate them. Capt. Connerat, who was in charge of the trucks, became lost in this practically unmapped section of the country and actually entered Metlaoui again after the Germans had taken over the town. He was fortunate to get out without being captured and finally rejoined our men early the next morning.

As this first group of the 727th was leaving the section where they had been cut off they were met at S'Bou Bakar by G-4 of the II Corps with instructions that General Fredendall had personally ordered that the ammunition which they had hidden in the tunnel be brought to S'Bou Bakar and there transferred to half tracks and taken to Thelepte. This meant that the 727th men had to go back into enemy territory, fire up an engine, and start out with the ammunition. Just as the train left Henchir a boiler tube in the old French locomotive failed and the engine lost all of its steam. A second engine was frantically fired up, but meanwhile the higher command countermanded previous orders and decided it was too dangerous to attempt to unload the train in daylight. It would have to be held in the tunnel and brought over the mountain to the blown-up bridge the following night. The Americans had no reconnaissance forces in this area and no one knew the exact location of the German troops. They were known to be in

Metlaoui which was only 20 miles from Henchir and about eight miles from Moulares.

The men had all been without sleep for at least three days and two nights. They took three hours' rest and then went to Moulares to strip and hide the locomotives left there. The locomotives were placed underground in the phosphate mines, after the side rods and valve motion had been removed. These vital parts were placed in the  $2\frac{1}{2}$ -ton truck. While everyone was busily engaged in stripping the locomotives, a lead German tank of a group of several tanks entered Moulares and found the 727th trucks. Evidently, the Germans did not know the size of the American force there and decided to advance with caution. This gave our men time to get to their two trucks and leave Moulares over a trail toward the southwest.

A book could be written about the trials and tribulations of that trip. One of the motors failed and the  $2\frac{1}{2}$ -ton truck lost most of its power. Thirty men pushed the two trucks through the sand. They were mistaken for Germans and fired on by Senegalese troops manning anti-tank guns, but miraculously, all their shells went wild, although the Senegalese were firing at almost point-blank range. Somehow they found their way back to Tebessa, carrying with them 45 French civilians and the parts of the

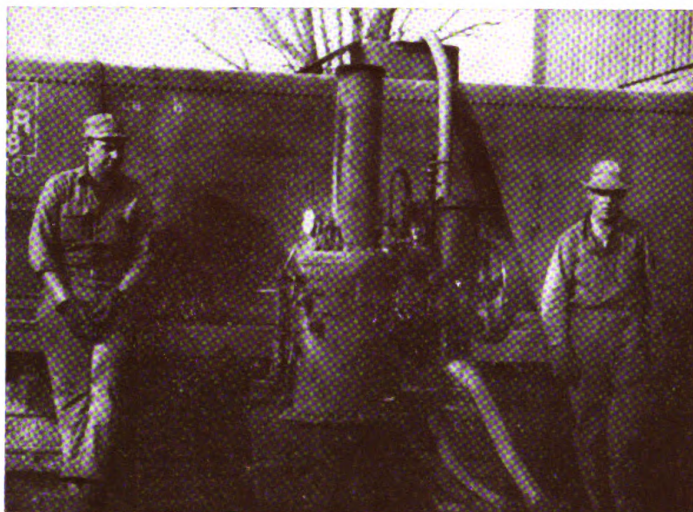
*Concrete railroad ties at Reghaia, Algeria—a common sight in North Africa, where wood is scarce.*



stripped locomotives. Upon their return the men were very much surprised and amazed to learn that they had been officially reported captured or killed. For several weeks they were constantly explaining that it was all a mistake.

In the meantime, the Germans advanced

Company men were the only ones available to run the trains. Acting as firemen and engine-men, they did a marvelous job, and later there was much kidding and arguing about whether "C" Company or "A" Company was best qualified to operate trains.



*Water men on duty at the pump, Armandy, Algeria.*

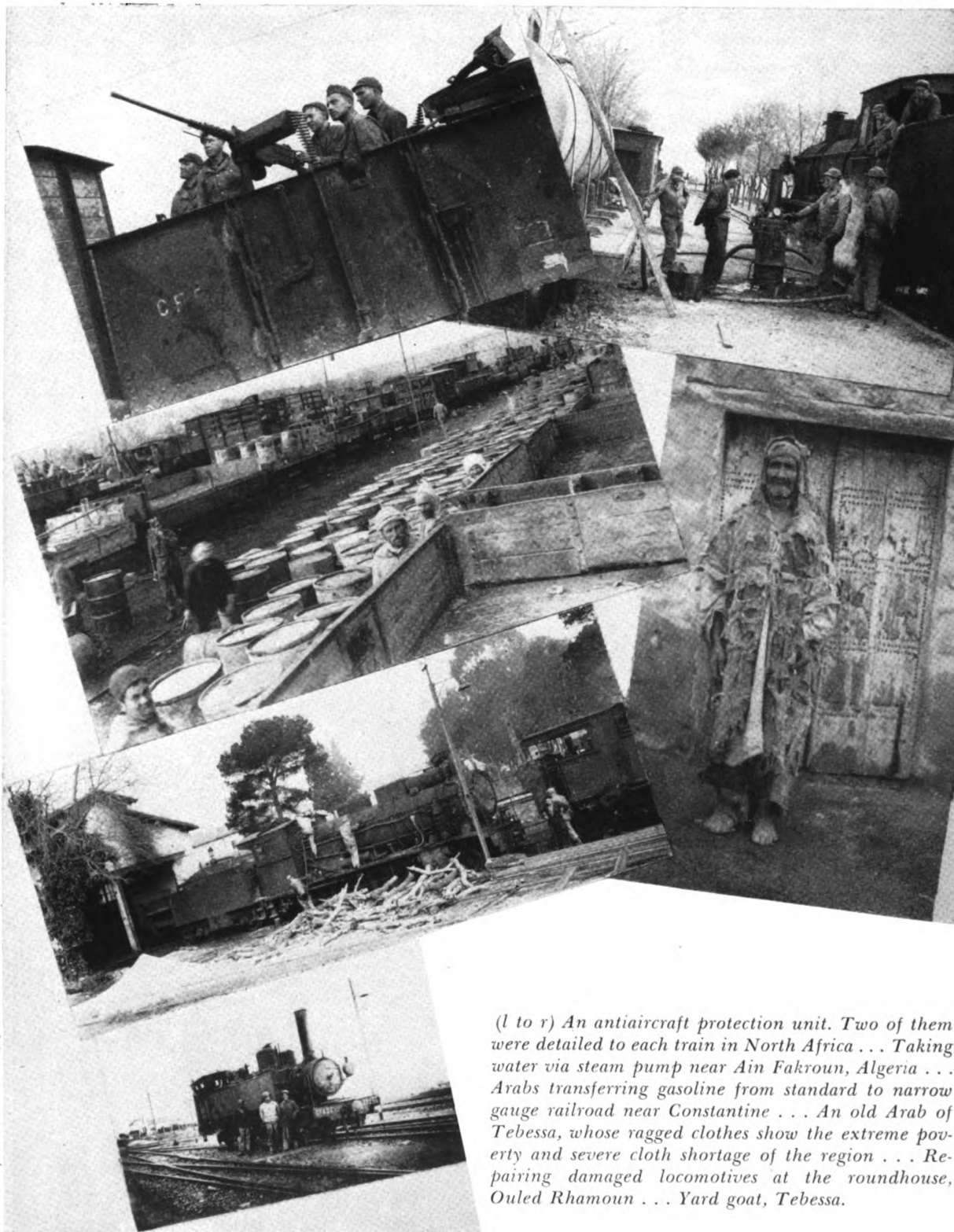
*Col. Okie and the men he led to safety from behind the enemy lines at the crucial point in the African campaign.*



rapidly from Gafsa on Thelepte and Kasserine, drove the American forces from Thelepte, went through the pass and up the railroad toward Haidra, where they were finally stopped by a combined force of British and American troops that had been sent down from the north. The detachment of "C" Company in that area, on being cut off, hastily departed from Moulares via the desert for Tebessa. When it became necessary, that same night, to evacuate the railroad equipment in the Thelepte area, the "A"

On Thursday morning, the day the Americans pushed through Kasserine, "A" Company moved approximately 30 locomotives and 300 cars in Haidra. Actually, every bit of equipment at Kasserine was moved except one car with a prefabricated bridge on it. This car had been derailed by the French and was rerailed by the 727th but could not be evacuated because no engines were available at that time. A French captain decided that he and a group of French soldiers would take one of the locomotives from





(l to r) An anti-aircraft protection unit. Two of them were detailed to each train in North Africa . . . Taking water via steam pump near Ain Fakroun, Algeria . . . Arabs transferring gasoline from standard to narrow gauge railroad near Constantine . . . An old Arab of Tebessa, whose ragged clothes show the extreme poverty and severe cloth shortage of the region . . . Repairing damaged locomotives at the roundhouse, Ouled Rhamoun . . . Yard goat, Tebessa.



Haidra, go to Kasserine and bring out this last car. When we returned to Kasserine several weeks later, only remains of the locomotive were found. It had been stopped by a dozen artillery shells when only two hundred yards from the car. Most of the group were never heard of again.

The evacuation from Kasserine and Thelepte and the transfer of troops to stop the Germans created a tremendous problem. It was not only necessary for the 727th to bring up food and supplies for these troops but it was also necessary to keep all of the motive power and cars at Tebessa ready so they could be evacuated on almost an hour's notice. Actually, nearly every piece of railroad equipment was evacuated from Tebessa and it was not until 60 days later that this equipment could be replaced in service. The Germans did not capture Tebessa but they came so close to it that all of the American supply dumps were mined and it was just a matter of a little more push by the Germans and they would have destroyed the Americans' main supply base in eastern Algeria.

A digest of Lt. V. E. Williams' notes tells a vivid story of the work which the B & B platoon accomplished in this trying time.

Feb. 2: Reconnaissance made from Gafsa to Sened found that track was damaged in five places, one large crater blown, and ten rails required to put line in service. Had begun repair work on the morning of Feb. 3 when we were told to withdraw to Gafsa, and abandon this area to the Nazi advance.

Feb. 3: At night we followed one of our engines out of Sened. About three miles out the engine stopped, with the engine having trouble keeping up steam pressure. At 2:00 A.M. we got her rolling again. The engineer really took off this time for it had been over three hours since we had seen a vehicle or an American soldier . . . I was never more overjoyed than when I saw the town of Gafsa with American soldiers at the pass guarding the city.

Yet when we left Gafsa the following day, the engine conked out. "This is one of the many

instances," wrote Lt. Williams, "in which there has been a Supreme Being taking care of us."

Feb. 7: Lt. Williams, Sgt. M. P. Miles and Cpl. Wernsing made a bridge reconnaissance, and checked equipment at Gafsa and Metlaoui.



*Repairing track damage near La Meskiana with the aid of native labor.*

Feb. 17: The B & B platoon turned into an S-4 platoon, loading ammo and gasoline. On the return trip, Pfc. W. C. Brown was injured when he was sideswiped by another truck. And to make it a full day, the platoon helped evacuate a truckload of French refugees and a load of Rangers.

Feb. 17: The platoon was ordered to





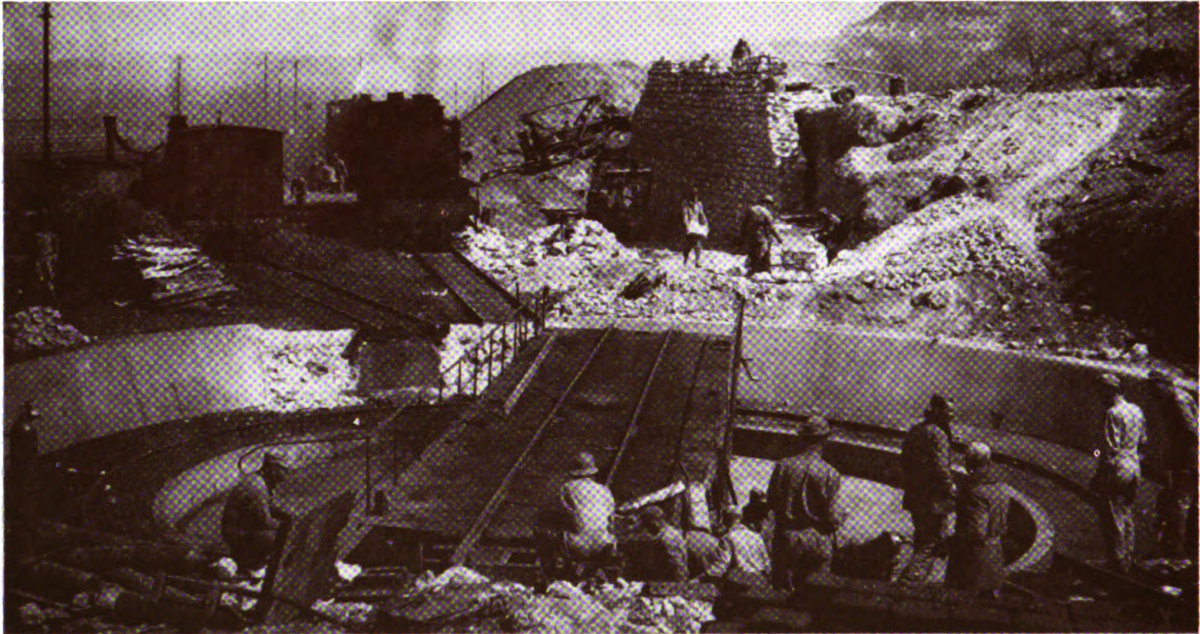
(Top) Turning a locomotive at Khenchela . . . (Center) Working on the west leg of wye at Tebessa . . .  
(Bottom) Co. "A" men surfacing track at Valmy, Algeria, January 11, 1943.

Kasserine Pass to help run a train from Kasserine to Sbeitla for evacuation purposes. In this move the group was assisted by an Arab engineer, who consented to run a train only after a pistol was put against his stomach . . .

The B & B platoon took out the eighth and last train from Kasserine that was to leave the pass for two months. It was a dangerous job,

ing up supplies to the advancing armies and corps. On March 29th, all tracks were open for operation from Gafsa to Sened and Kasserine to Sbeitla.

There was much unfair and unjust criticism of the American Army because of the Kasserine catastrophe. One division was almost completely wiped out, with less than a hundred men remaining in some of its battalions. Although



*Working on turntable and retaining wall for a coal chute at the Tebessa shop. Everything was turned by hand here including the turntable.*

with the night sky illuminated by burning tanks and weapons carriers—a night, says Lt. Williams, his platoon never forgot.

From February 20th until the 24th, the battalion waited tensely. Then, almost as suddenly as they had attacked, the troops of General Rommel retreated, destroying bridges as they went. Company "A" rebuilt these bridges almost as soon as the Germans had cleared the area. They soon gained a healthy respect for the various types of mines—Teller and bouncing—which had been placed on bridges and their abutments. Close behind "A" came "C," mov-

American forces were forced to retreat every man had done his best. The 727th could justly feel proud of the part it played in this first battle. The battalion received a citation for its work.

Our medics came in for their share of activity during this phase of the campaign. Enroute to a Gafsa assignment, Pvts. Luther Hall and Winfred Wagner were strafed by a German plane. At Sbeitla, the small detachment, headed by Lt. Robert E. Osburn and Sgt. Arnold C. Kirby, treated patients from other organizations, including the 1st Armored Division, and infantry



and quartermaster units. The work at Kasserine was made more difficult by the French hospital there having been booby-trapped. Perhaps the most harrowing but successful operation performed by our medics involved the treatment of an Arab who had been badly injured by a mine explosion. Using morphine anesthesia, the Arab's right arm was amputated five inches above the wrist with the only available surgical "instrument"—an old hack saw and blade. Two leg wounds were also cleaned and closed. The operation was performed in an open field. So well did our men do their work that five days later the patient was well on his way to recovery.

About this time we could begin to see victory ahead in North Africa. The II Corps had joined the British Eighth Army at El Guettar, and were slugging it out toward Tunis and Cape Bon Peninsula. We continued to open up rail lines toward Tunis and Sfax, the latter being the main base of the Eighth Army.

March was memorable in another small but important respect. We actually got some laundry washed, and although its finished condition was not anything like the stuff we had seen hanging on the wash lines back home, it was better than what we had been used to among the cacti of Tebessa.

April and May saw the wind-up of the North African campaign. More and more, despite faulty track and dilapidated locomotives and cars, the 727th was keeping things rolling. On May 13th, some of our engines hauled several trainloads of prisoners back over the road to Tebessa. Rommel was not among them, having escaped to fight again another day. We were beginning to understand our French conductors and Arab brakemen a little better, and in general, we were operating as a team that had the respect of all units it supported and worked with.

## Ghost Of Casey Jones! Here's A GI Railroad

**NEAR THE TUNISIAN FRONT**—That famous old American ditty, "I've Been Working on the Railroad," now is being warbled by U. S. soldiers as they labor with .45's on their hips and railroad tools in their hands.

They are commanded by Capt. Aubrey Cary, former roundhouse foreman from Alexandria, Va., are operating the only GI-railroad in North Africa. It's 120 miles long, and quite a few trains make the trip each day with soldiers handling all jobs from engineering to rebuilding old cars in the work shop.

Since they took over on Jan. 26, the boys have run into enough problems to set Casey Jones spinning in his grave. The meter-gauge tracks: Algerian, Tunisian and Sfax-Gafsa Phosphate Mines

this outfit when there's work to be done. When we first saw Capt. Cary, he was tugging on a switch. His face was begrimed and a huge plug of chewing tobacco bulged in his jaw.

"Just look at them boys," he bellowed. "Just look at them. No coal chute. They have to load it on the engines by hand."

"Nobody's repaired any of these locomotives for three years. We have to do it and we get our spare parts off the junk heap. When we get through here, these soldiers will be able to put an engine together blindfolded."

The topkick is John Dennis, of Kent, Ohio. He's a jack of all trades. But his hardest task is persuading the Arabs to work. They're bossed by one Benjeddah, 51 years old, who was a sergeant himself in a native company during the last war. Dennis calls him some classic names, but Benjeddah, who understands not a word of English, smiles and accepts the cursing as a compliment for his fine work.

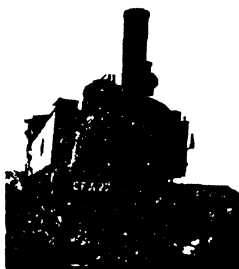
### SHOP FOREMAN

Another lad who has his troubles is 1st Lt. Jesse H. Norris, of New Orleans. He's the shop foreman, the same job he held for the Southern RR in New Orleans in peace time.

Lt. Norris' chief peccs are lumber and steel to rebuild the freight cars that tote valuable loads toward the front. His shop always is filled to capacity. It was pretty tough that day when two engines collided and 13 cars suffered the results. And when 22 other cars broke loose and rolled down a hill. They were loaded with flour—and it looked as though a snowstorm had covered the landscape.

But work goes on 24 hours a day and engines keep rolling. The boys barrack across the yard in a huge cactus patch, some of the plants growing eight feet tall. All of them spit coal dust when they have time to spit.

Soon, they hope to extend operations to Gabes and Tunis, using the last-war cars now creaking over these rails—cars with the rain-worn painted signs, "40 Hommes, 8 Chevaux."



... plenty of trouble ...

locomotives dating back to 1895; a square roundhouse and a turntable that has to be pushed by 10 to 20 men has actually lopped 30 pounds off Capt. Cary's once ample midriff.

### OLD HANDS

Originally this soldier railroad crew came under the heading of Engineers. Now they're called the Transportation Corps. They don't care. Probably 80 percent of them came to the army with a railroad background and they feel right at home amidst steam, soot and smoke.

Rank doesn't count for much in

*A writeup of the 727th which was printed in "Stars and Stripes."*

We had furnished crews for the Oued Keberit line, prepared for a January attack, operated trains in the evacuation of Gafsa, "been in" on the Kasserine Pass, repaired or assisted in the repair of seven major bridges vital to supply and continued advance, and accomplished it in a way that drew commendations.

On June 21st we were relieved of our duties by the 713th, and transferred to Tabarka on the Mediterranean coast to recondition, re-equip

and prepare for something that was in the wind. Whatever it was, the battalion felt ready for anything. In spite of discouraging odds its men

ever such achievements were at all possible.

We were really a battalion now—in spirit as well as in a sense of real accomplishment. Our



*(Above) Throwing out rail on the Tebessa wye . . . (Below) Bathing at Tabarka on the Mediterranean at the end of the North African campaign—Maj. Moss, Lt. Hickey and Lt. Perkins in foreground.*

had gone through the first test, had followed a victorious Allied Army with trains that ran and supplies that moved in time and on time when-

surplus of morale was to be drawn on in the next mission that was shaping up—the operation in Sicily.





## *Sicily*

### A MOST COMPLETE OPERATION

#### *A Real Job With "Blood and Guts"*

SICILY, when we arrived there in mid-July to help support the Seventh Army, wasn't much more than another geographical name to us. It didn't remain just a name for very long. There was work to be done because the Seventh Army was determined to finish this job in a hurry. On July 12th, the day after our first advance party arrived at Licata from Africa, we sent out a train to check and repair track between Licata and Campobello. Finding the track broken in several places, we made repairs the same day. The main reason for the trains soon starting to roll was our getting on the job immediately.

The dominating geographical feature in Sicily was, of course, Mt. Etna, surrounded by foothills and the sea. Sicily was an island of contrasts. When it rained, villages which clung to the side of cliffs appeared about ready to wash down the slopes into the sea. When the rain stopped, almost as suddenly as it began, the gaily painted donkey carts would be on their way again over the narrow winding roads that linked the towns of the island together.

Lt. Richard O. Bennett of Island Base Section described some of this in a few lines in his poem, "Panorama of Sicily."

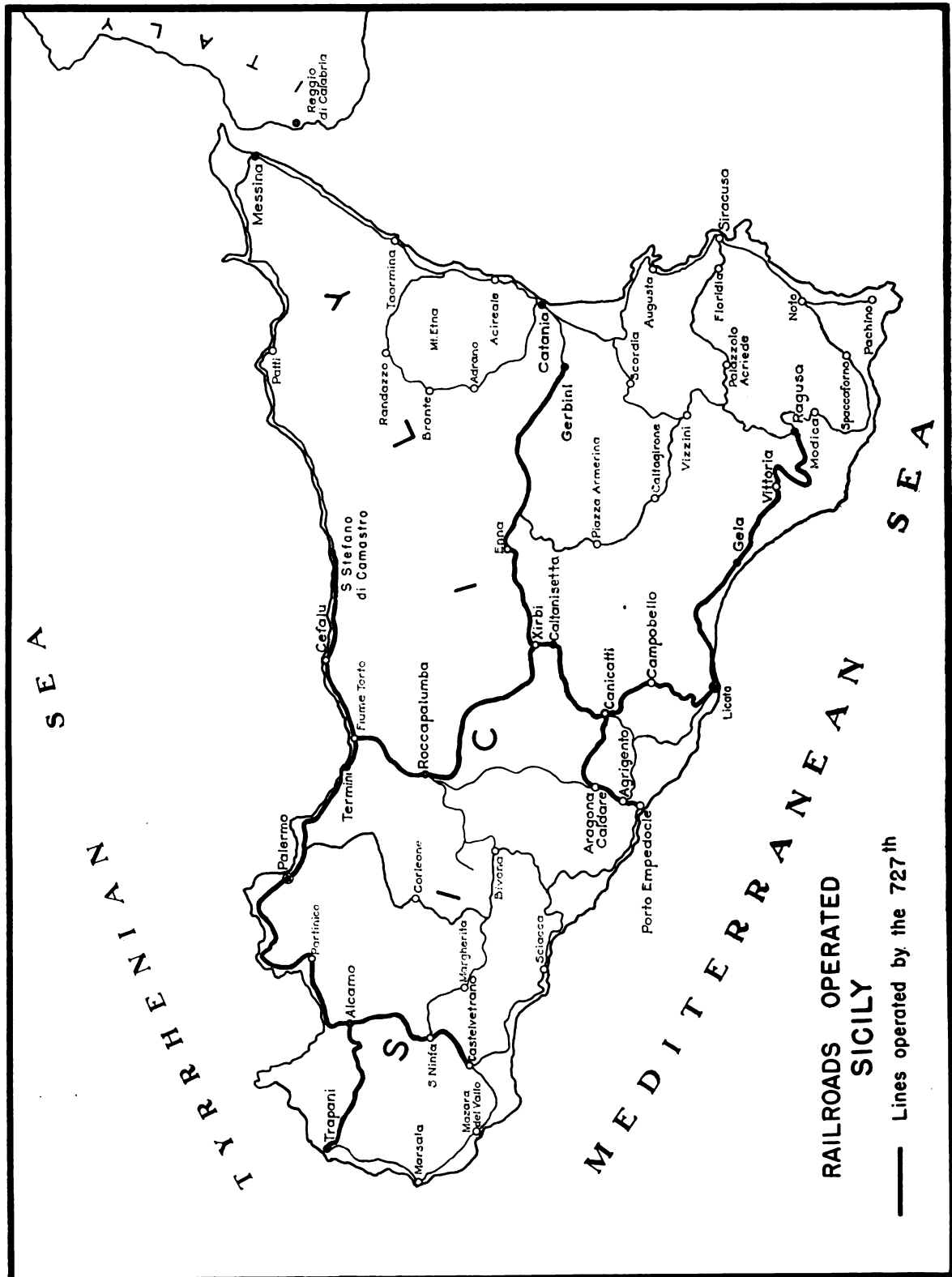
*Lumbering carts, hogging the road;  
Nondescript trucks, frequently towed;  
Diminutive donkeys, loaded for bear;  
Horse-drawn taxis, seeking a fare*

*Fine old homes, pride of the nation,  
Beautiful to see, but no sanitation;  
Well-equipped schools, without a scholar,  
Temples of learning, surrounded by squalor*

The Seventh Army was driving inland under the picturesque, profane, but sure guidance of General Patton. He, and others, had estimated the campaign would take 85 days, partly because of poor communications and transport. Actually, the conquest of Sicily took only 38 days.

More, perhaps, than in any other campaign in which we participated, our army depended upon us, simply because fast and efficient truck transport was impossible on what passed for roads. How we accomplished our job is told elsewhere in this book, over the signature of the late great General Patton who ran the Sicilian show.

Nearly every section of the battalion hit trouble from the start. From Palermo east to Cefalu it was necessary to use civilian signalmen under GI protection. Our signalmen usually followed Company "C" trains, but on some oc-





casions they managed to lay wire and repair breaks ahead of them. Much wire was badly cut up by bombing and small-arms fire. Sabotage accounted for other snarls, such as fine wire wrapped around major circuits on the lines.

Our two track platoons under Capt. Boles learned quite a bit about tunnel repair in a hurry. The first tunnel west of Enna was found caved in at the tunnel's center. It was cleared by hand and then cribbed up. Near Isola del Femine, a picturesque name for a town more picturesque than sanitary, an 800-foot tunnel damaged by demolitions was reopened by our battalion with the assistance of Italian workers. In Sicily we captured and used our first Roth-Wagner bridging.

Company "A" had the job of water supply. From the beginning, water was a problem. Sgt. John L. Denson displayed great ingenuity in obtaining it. There was very little of it—so little, in fact, that some locomotives were given water from five gallon cans. Water cars and trucks were pressed into service in a hurry, and by August 12th, there was sufficient water in the southern section of the island so that boilers could be washed. There were enough locomotives for the campaign in both northern and southern sectors, and by some judicious part-stealing, about 180 were kept in continuous service. Train operation was handled from three headquarters — Palermo, Licata and Caltanissetta.

Typical of the improvisations that became second nature to the 727th during this period was this account by a member of a train crew:

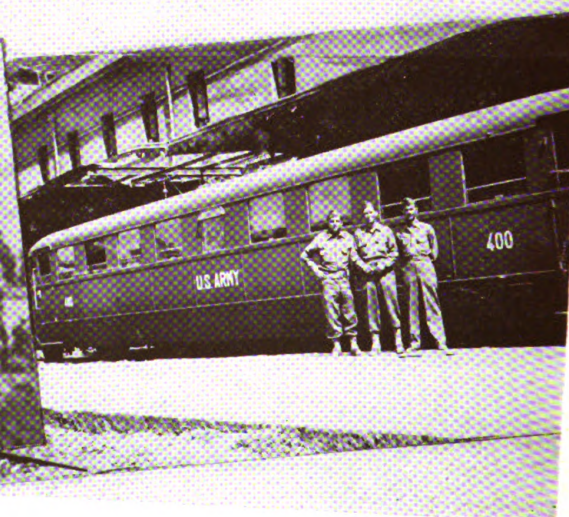
Ran out of water at San Stefano, August 12, 1500 hours. I contacted . . . LST376, Chief Engineer, and he strung a 400-foot fire hose from ship to locomotive and gave me 5,000 gallons of water. During this operation six German planes attacked ship and locomotive. No hits were scored by German planes. Watering operation continued until completed and an engine failure was averted.

On many days in the Sicilian campaign it was necessary for nearly every man in the battalion to work around the clock. On some of the ammo runs up to the front Company "C" crews operated to within easy earshot of Long Toms and other big guns firing the ammunition that the 727th had brought up to the lines just a few hours previously.

Since we were not attached to Military Railway Service, as we had been in the Tunisian campaign, the battalion did its own staff work, tactical planning, and maintained liaison with the supply office (G-4) of the Seventh Army. In addition to operating 350 miles of railroad that had been sabotaged and damaged in many places many times, we had to perform the function of railway traffic officers in five ports, numerous base dumps and railheads. What made planning particularly difficult was the distance of various parts of the battalion from one another. Men and equipment were scattered from one end of the island to the other. This is what the *Yankee Boomer* had to say about it shortly after the campaign's close:

The Sicilian honors conferred on the battalion as a whole were for a job probably unparalleled in railroad history. It landed its advance reconnaissance party as soon as a bridgehead had been established. Taking over an unfamiliar railroad system in a hostile country, it suffered under bombings and in the mine fields as did the combat troops, but nevertheless delivered the goods exactly as though it were running trains back in the States in peacetime.

The 727th, in Sicily, had thousands of passengers who rode the cars with mixed emotions—some were happy about the whole thing; others were morose at the turn of affairs that had given them a free ride. They were, of course, Nazi prisoners who had been captured by the Seventh Army. But for every Nazi who rode back over our rails, almost seven GI's rode up, with the battalion transporting thousands of troops into and out of the campaign. Uncounted

*Present and Accounted for*



(Top, l to r) Somewhere in Sicily: T/5 Counts, Lt. Perkins, Carter, Patterson and Lineberger. (Front, l to r) Sgt. Parker, Cpl. Counts, Lt. Perkins, Sgt. Stump, Januseski; (Rear) Berry, Herkalo, Beck, Carter. (Center) Chow (10-in-1) at Gerbini being "enjoyed" by (l. to r.) Sgt. Wilson, T/5 Carter, Sgt. Ufheil, Pfc Flanders, Capt. Mauney, Lt. Cabra, T/5 Piersall, T/4 Pridgen, T/4 Hollie, T/4 Deeney, T/5 Palmer, T/5 Hull, Pfc. Koenig . . . Sgt. Owen with a Sicilian diesel that ran. (Bottom) POW's boarding LST . . . Capt. Mauney, Lts. Bowen and Cabra with the "400" in Sicily.

were the homeless who hopped a ride. Particularly unwelcome guests were the scavengers, camp followers who moved from one stricken area to another to take advantage of the black market.

Palermo fell on July 25th, leaving the great port open for supply ships to come in. Our trains immediately began transporting supplies eastwards toward Cefalu. Palermo was the main railroad center of the island, and Sicilian officials seemed more than willing to assist in every possible way. Headquarters was transferred to Palermo. Use of civilian personnel under the supervision of 727th train and engine crews was authorized to operate trains, build communications, and repair tracks and facilities. Palermo's large locomotive shops were placed in operation, and their storehouses were operated by our Battalion Supply personnel under Sgt. Robert E. Honea.

As Patton's army advanced toward Messina, new ports were opened and railheads established. One big task was to memorize the names. Trapani, Napola, Termini-Imerese, Cefalu, San Stefano, Pirato, Gerbini, Campofelice, and many other ports and railheads became common terms.

Events moved so rapidly in the Sicilian campaign that it is hard, in retrospect, to combine them into a connected story. Most of us well remember the sounds of the German fighters coming down out of the clouds to bomb our hastily set up railheads, especially at Palermo, and the healthy, alert crack of our tank guns up at the front. Nor shall we quickly forget the brilliant colors of the island, with its brightly

painted houses shining against great rocky hills. Also to be remembered will be the sight of our own cars lurching along the track behind our engines that ran, by the grace of God and pirated parts, much longer than we had any right to expect. Other such things which stand out were:

- The improvised hospital quarters in a very swanky apartment in Licata, which soon acquired the name of "Wonderland."

- The Medical Detachment that got its first taste of working with malaria cases when about five per cent of our battalion came down with it. With no hospital available, the resourceful medics set up their own. Sgt. R. L. Stewart and his squad performed in an outstanding manner.

- The big blaze at Licata when three runaway cars loaded with gasoline, ammo and miscellaneous supplies crashed into other cars in the Licata yards and started a fire which consumed 25 carloads of supplies. With gas drums and shrapnel flying about in a way that scared even the most carefree, our personnel on duty managed to pull out other carloads of supplies, keeping the fire to a small area until it could burn itself out. Here Sgt. Ken Phillips, Cpl. Joe Canzoneri, and several others really earned the decorations they later received.

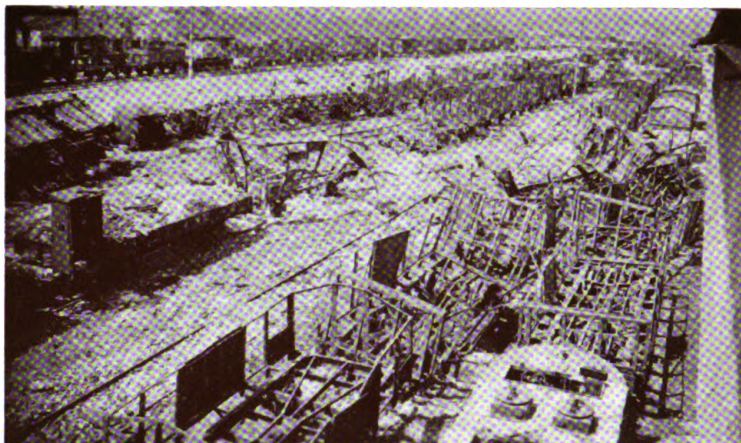
- With the main port line from Palermo tied up two locomotives and two head cars collided and turned over. Capt. A. M. Cary of Company "B," and Sgt. A. Journey of Company "A," cleared up the derailment in record time with inadequate equipment, such as wrecker trucks.

- The big load of hay, salted with hand grenades, which Company "A" men removed from a tunnel in Caltanissetta Centrale. There were many such obstructions.

- Company "C's" mess operation, which, as always, was on a 24-hour clip for anyone from the battalion who turned up and could use a little hot chow. It was a mystery to everyone how the mess sergeant kept stocked up with fresh eggs at Caltanissetta.

By September, tonnage and troop movement on the 727th trackage was averaging better than

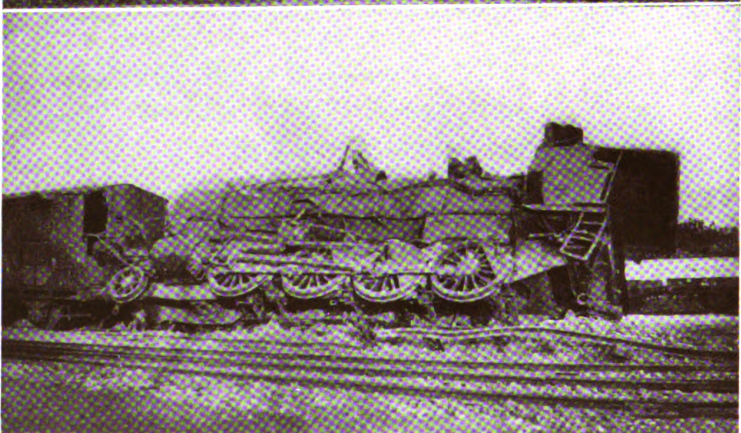
## *The Wreckage of War—A New But Old Story in Sicily*



*We had to rebuild this yard in Palermo, Sicily, after our bombers struck it.*



*Captured Italian railway guns near Palermo, Sicily.*

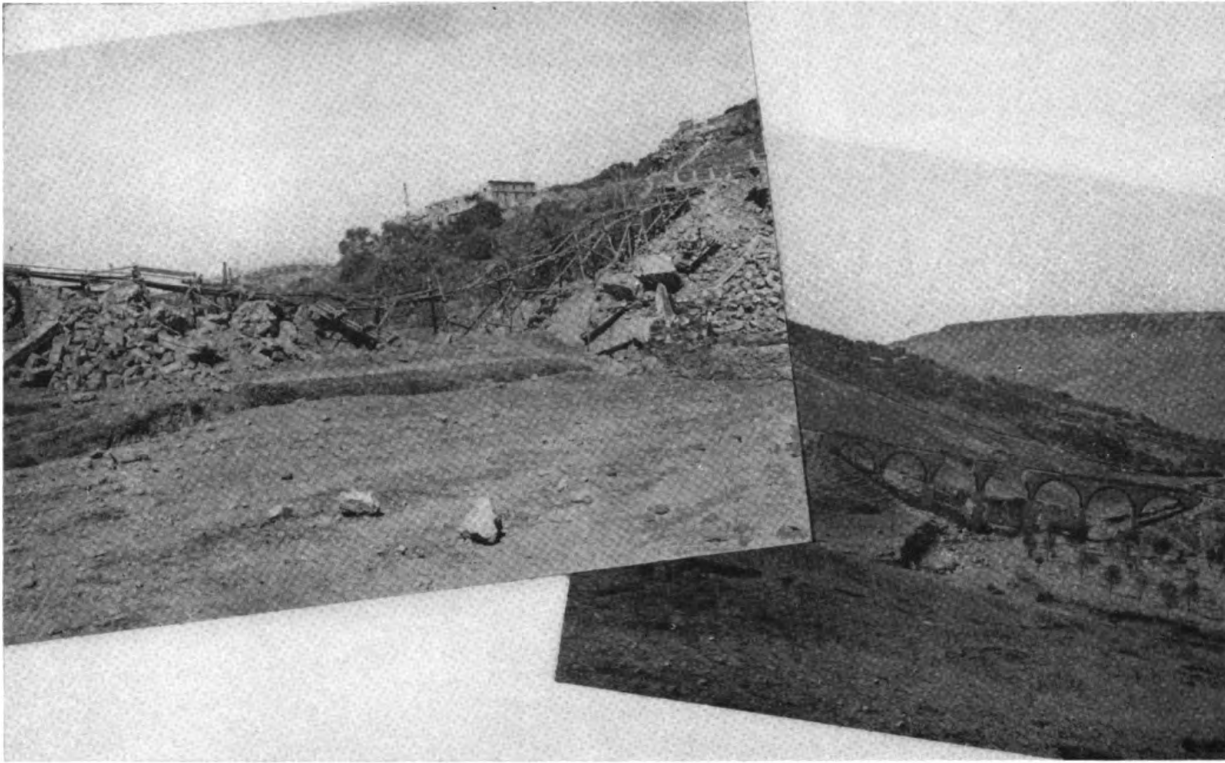


*Our bombers took the locomotion out of this locomotive in Sicily.*

3,000 tons daily. Because of a coal shortage, in part made less severe by Navy help, civilian passenger service was cut down. When the Ameri-

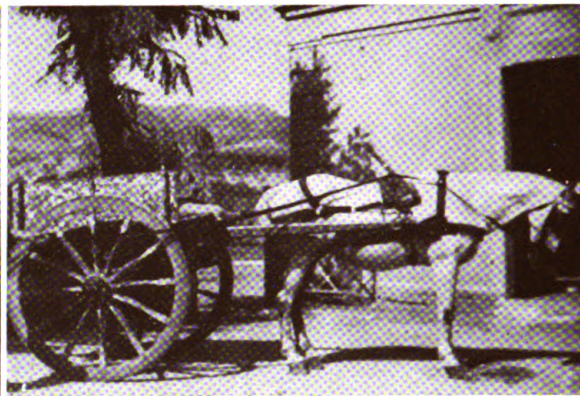
cans established control over the island, plans were made and put into effect to turn the railroads back to native Sicilian officials, who were,





*(Above) Two bridges, Agrigento . . . (Center) Canicatti station as the American bombers left it . . . (l. to r, below) The fire and damage caused east of Licata when a double-header locomotive struck cans of gasoline heaped on the main line by beach troops during the night.*





(Top left) Capt. Mauney measuring the girth of a column among some of the Roman ruins near Trapani . . . (Top right) Sicilian ceremonial cart with the usual highly decorated and ornamented sides . . .

(Center) A panoramic view in central Sicily . . . (Bottom left) Palermo harbor in the distance . . . (Bottom right) Canicatti, a junction point in Sicily, viewed from the water tank back of the shops.



(Top to bottom) Bell boys (King's Guards) at Palermo . . . Bill Bajada in Sicily . . . Gen. Gay, Col. Muller and Sicilian railroad men just before leaving on a trip . . . Lt. Col. Okie, Capt. Beard and Lt. Howie at Porto Empedocle. Lt. Howie was fined \$25 for not wearing his helmet in accordance with Gen. Patton's orders.

of course, under the nominal control still being maintained by RTO.

The payoff came in the report that some of our most valiant members were to be recognized. On September 24th, General Hobart R. Gay, Chief of Staff of the Seventh Army, and Colonel W. J. Muller, of G-4, who had observed our work closely, presented Soldier's Medals to Colonel F. W. Okie, Major R. P. Moss, Major C. O. Butler, M/Sgt. K. W. Phillips, Sgt. T. W. Lonero and T/5 J. G. Healy before a battalion formation at Caltanissetta. In the same month Sgt. Norwood L. Stone, Sgt. Charles Swan and Pfc. Frederick Vogel received the Soldier's Medal for fighting the ammunition fire at Palermo.

In October, others came in for their share of recognition. T/4 John L. Denson, who organized and directed the vital job of railway water service and repair, and S/Sgt. J. C. Browning, who headed the repair work on locomotives, roundhouses and cars when the advance party arrived at Licata, were awarded the Legion of Merit. Maj. Gen. M. S. Eddy, commanding the Ninth Infantry Division, which we helped support, praised the work of Sgt. Willard Luscalet of Company "C," who directed traffic at Cefalu.

While the 727th was preparing to leave Sicily, praise from the head of the Seventh Army which they had supported so well came through:

Allied Force  
MILITARY RAILWAY SERVICE  
Transportation Corps  
Office of Director General  
A. P. O. 512  
19 September 1943

MEMORANDUM  
NO. 1

Under authority contained in Par 7, Circular 126, NATOUSA, 2 July 1943, the





VOL. 1 NO. 1

OCTOBER 7, 1943.

# GENERAL PATTON LAUDS MRS UNIT

## Railroad Battalion Cited For Work In Sicily Campaign

*What  
They Said  
About Us...*

For the second time since it came overseas, the 727th Railway Operating Battalion has been cited in its entirety for outstanding accomplishments on the field of battle in this theater.

This latest award to the now-famous MRS battalion came from no less a personage than Lieut. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr., commander of the Seventh Army in the Sicilian campaign. In a letter to Brig. Gen. Carl R. Gray, Jr., MRS Director General, General Patton gave the "Chemists" a large share of the credit for the successful conclusion of the war on that Axis island stronghold.

*Over Here* ➞

In addition, the battalion's commanding officer, Lieut. Col. Fred W. Okie, received his second award of the war in the Mediterranean Theater, adding the Soldier's Medal to the Legion of Merit ribbon he already had gained in the Tunisian campaign.

The 727th's first citation also was won in Africa, before the battalion went over to Sicily. And, by coincidence, Colonel Okie won his Sicilian medal as he did his Tunisian award, not in the everyday routine of command, but by an exploit of personal valor performed amidst bursting grenades and flying shell fragments rather than in the shelter of a headquarters.

The Sicilian honors conferred on the battalion as a whole were for a job probably unparalleled in railroad history. It landed its advance reconnaissance party as soon as a bridgehead had been established. Taking over an unfamiliar railroad system in a hostile country, it suffered under bombings and in the mine fields as did the combat troops, but nevertheless delivered the goods exactly as though it were running trains back in the States in peacetime.

The advance party was especially noted by General Patton in his commendation. The group landed at Licata, reconnoitered the rail yards, organized civilian rail workers, located equipment, got up steam on a locomotive, figured out how to operate it, and made a pioneer run, all within four hours after first hitting the beach. Twenty hours later, full trains laden with vital supplies were moving into forward positions held by the Third Division, thereby releasing many trucks for battle duties.

The reconnaissance party, incident-



West end of tunnel ease of Marianapoli—Sgt. Shannon and Capt. Boles on the hand car.



GENERAL PATTON  
LAUDS MRS UNIT  
(Continued from Page 1)

ally, was led by two heroes of an ammunition train explosion which occurred during the North African campaign. They were Major Charles O. Butler, of Lakeland, Fla., who stood in the midst of an inferno to direct the work of dragging to safety the cars not yet reached by the flames, and Capt. Marvin L. Horton, Rocky Mount, N.C., who piloted the locomotive which disentangled the flaming wreckage. Both received Soldier's Medals. Horton was promoted to captain after the Sicilian battle.

Obstacles in Sicily were a railroad man's nightmare. There were demolitions, and mines by the hundreds, which the 727th personnel handled by themselves, thus releasing engineer units to join the combat troops.

Sabotage was encountered, and surliness on the part of the civilian workers. Very little was known in advance about the operation of the Italian equipment, nor the system of dispatch.

Trains were bombed and strafed. They were fired upon by ground troops, for as fast as a section of road was wrested from the enemy it was put into use supplying the front lines.

In spite of these handicaps, "The opening of the rail lines and organization of the Italian railroad personnel were made so rapidly that rail service was immediately available in the port of Palermo when it opened on the 28th of July, and service maintained from that port in spite of bombing attacks and sabotage", the commendation said.

As for Colonel Okie's Soldier's Medal, the intrepid Alabaman from Birmingham calmly sauntered into a yard where a warehouse filled with ammunition was burning and exploding, to take charge of the work of removing ammunition trains endangered by the blaze.

The citation noted particularly that Colonel Okie not only told those under him what to do, but pitched in along with his men and helped them do the job.

It was General Gray who conferred the Tunisian citation upon the 727th. The men of the battalion were the railroad heroes of the Kasserine fighting; the advance in January, the retreat the following month, and the final victorious sweep.

In January the advance parties actually got ahead of the patrols and wrested French locomotives from the Axis troops in bitter fighting. Colonel Okie won his Legion of Merit decoration in the retreat of February.

Trying to save a trainload of ammunition that had been abandoned, the colonel and his party were cut off by German tanks. They destroyed the train, and then Colonel Okie led his detachment, augmented every mile by panic-stricken civilian refugees, down into the desert and around the southern flanks of the enemy to safety behind the Allied lines.

The 727th is composed largely of personnel from the Southern Railway.

## MILITARY RAILROAD MEN

Among the prizes of the Sicilian campaign were some three hundred locomotives and three thousand cars, two-thirds of them in good order. Among these were a large number of new German cars. Brigadier General Gray, director general of the Military Railway Service, said the other day that British and American railway men were operating 420 miles of track the third day after the first landings. Yesterday a dispatch from North Africa told that the American Army's "crack 727th Railway Operating Battalion" had been cited by General Patton for its skill and swiftness in running Sicilian trains under fire.

A short while ago three officers and three enlisted men of the M. R. S. got the Soldier's Medal for switching cars away from a burning ammunition train. This is what you would expect of good railroad men. Their work is of great moment, and they are doing it well and bravely. In 1942 the Army Transportation Corps was established to direct, supervise and coordinate all transportation functions of the War Department. This is an enormous job, covering shipments by highway, rail and water. Major General Gross, director general of the Army Transportation Corps, said in June that more than eighteen million measurement tons of cargo had been shipped overseas, more than twice as much as was shipped during the whole period of American participation in the First World War; and that four times as many troops had been moved as were moved in the same time during that war. You get some notion of what mechanized war requires in the matter of transportation from the statement of General Gross that

it takes seventy-five trains and 2,700 cars to move an armored division with its 3,700 or more vehicles by rail, and to move it overseas with its reserve complement of equipment and supplies takes at least fifteen Liberty ships in addition to the necessary troopships.

There is a West Point at Fort Slocum where dispatchers, engineers and machinists are trained to be officers. It would be ungrateful to forget such officers and the men they command. Their service isn't showy but it is indispensable.

—N. Y. Times

Over  
There! ➡

## *Decorations for the Battalion*



*We were so busy it was difficult to release enough men to hold even a token review. The damaged building in the background had been cleaned up previously and buried bodies removed, including that of an Italian general.*



*Gen. Gay, Chief of Staff, Seventh Army, inspects the outfit at Caltanissetta and awards decorations to Lt. Col. Okie, Maj. Moss, Maj. Butler, Sgts. Phillips, Healy and Lonero before part of the battalion for outstanding performance of duty and for bravery during the Sicilian campaign.*





Director General takes great pleasure in announcing the following commendation from Lieutenant General G. S. Patton, Jr., Commanding General of the Seventh Army:

"During the initial operations of the Seventh Army in the Gela-Licata-Porto Empedocle Area, an Advance Party of the 727th Railway Operating Battalion landed at Licata on 12 July. This advance detachment made a reconnaissance of the railroad yards, organized native rail workers, located equipment, had steam up, and made a reconnaissance of the rail lines within four hours after landing. Within twenty-four hours after landing, supplies were being moved by rail to the 3rd Division on 13 July 1943. On 15 July, the second increment of the Advance Party landed at Licata. They immediately made reconnaissance of rail lines, communications and equipment, placed key men in strategic rail junctions, established RTO's at railheads and port clearances, and effectively organized the Italian rail system in spite of many handicaps of demolition and enemy destruction. This accomplishment relieved the truck transportation for use at more critical points in advanced area. The main body of

the Battalion arrived on the 23rd of July and the necessary plans had been so well formulated by the Advance Party that the entire Battalion was moved into action in numerous rail operations extending over the entire western part of Sicily. The opening of the rail lines and organization of the Italian railroad personnel were made so rapidly that rail service was immediately available in the port of Palermo when it opened on the 28th of July, and service maintained from that port in spite of bombing attacks and sabotage. This Battalion worked day and night to accomplish its mission and was a strong influence in the movement of supplies to the front lines during the Sicilian Campaign. The initiative and the perseverance of the officers and enlisted men of the 727th Railway Operating Battalion, working on a strange railroad and with strange equipment, without regard to personal safety, are a credit to the Military Railway Service and traditions of the service as a whole."

/s/ Carl R. Gray, Jr.

/t/ CARL R. GRAY, JR.

Brigadier General, USA  
Director General







# Italy

## OPERATIONS FROM POTENZA TO PISA

### *Ripping the Soft Under-Belly of the Axis*

THE first units of our battalion to enter Italy were Company "A" and the signal section of "H & S" Company. They left the port of Termini on October 13th and landed at Naples, where the men set up bivouac in the railway freight depot of San Giovanni Barra. As usual, there was plenty of work awaiting us. Repairs on the main line south toward Torro del Grecco were necessary to contact the British, who were making repairs as they worked north. Our signal section performed yeoman service in clearing away the wrecked catenary system and establishing communications. After this job was finished, the company moved to Capua. This ancient seat of learning in Renaissance Italy was also famous for its garden, where Romeo and Juliet met in the moonlight. But the work which Company "A" accomplished there included no moonlight escapades of a Shakespearian nature.

On October 27th the company was assigned the double job of building a 300-foot bridge over the swift and muddy Volturno River and of reconstructing trackage in that area. The retreating Germans had done a remarkably thorough job of leaving the entire area in a carefully planned state of chaos. Huge railroad bridges were destroyed, tunnels blown in, rail and track facilities—especially main lines—destroyed by



*The 727th crossing the Straits of Messina by ferry at the beginning of the Italian campaign. Trucks are those we convoyed to Naples.*

demolition and fire. Water stations were also destroyed, but 727th water service men had been up against that sort of thing before in Sicily, and soon devised ways and means of obtaining water, and of restoring damaged equipment to service.

Before leaving, the Nazis had put into operation an ingenious device that was something new in the art of wrecking a military railroad. They had constructed a huge plow which they considered to be so successful that they wrote of it in operational bulletins issued to their troops on all fronts. The plow was towed behind three locomotives and dragged down the middle of the track, ripping through every crosstie for miles. Another demolition machine did almost as much damage by blowing out every section of rail in a track. All in all, about 200 to 300 miles of track were left completely unserviceable. Company "A," working on the simple theory that what had been torn out could always be put back, spent weary days and nights proving their point. It was here that Sgt. John W. Shannon won his recommendation for a commission.

The Company put in bridges at Capua, Teano, Gargliana, Cecenie, Telemona; and tunnels at Itri, Sparinise and Massice. What had to be done looked impossible, but by the end of October, our first "letter" company could almost guarantee that the railheads would be only a few miles behind any part of the front line. The war in Italy was a bitter "shootin' war," and the railheads had to be near the shooting.

The remainder of the 727th was fretting in Sicily, well aware that its help was needed on the Italian mainland. How they got into action again forms one of the classic stories of the 727th's history, and is reprinted here in part from the account in the *Yankee Boomer*:

So they told the railroad operating battalion they would have to move more than 500 miles by highway. "But we haven't enough trucks to move a whole battalion," murmured the commanding officer. "We will give you the trucks," came the reply.

Most of the soldiers in the battalion are

hard-bitten railroad men to whom a truck is just a gadget that backs up to a freight dock to take away something that a freight car has brought into the station. "They're not such good trucks," Ordnance admitted, turning over 160 assorted vehicles, "and we expect that you'll lose about ten per cent of them in transit."

The officers of the battalion agreed that the trucks weren't so hot. They had gone through an entire campaign. They needed a variety of repairs such as would have made a third echelon maintenance officer ask for rotation, but the Colonel knew what he was doing. He selected WO (J.G.) James E. Weaver, of Rocky Mount, N. C., and Sgt. A. A. Wiegert for the over-all survey job—and it did mean overalls . . . He assembled a crew of mechanics to supplement his small motor-pool force, and although most of them were well versed with the intricacies of steam power, only a few were familiar with what goes on under an auto hood. Anyway, they went to work on broken axles, fouled fuel lines, leaky water pumps, flat tires, ignition trouble and the other things that can go wrong with 160 six-by-sixes that have been taking one hell of a beating in a war . . .

The *Boomer* goes on to say that somehow the battalion was able to leave Palermo and arrive on the Italian mainland on November 10th. The article continues:

The convoy commander knew his dispersal tactics. In fact, he landed at Italian beaches scattered from hell to breakfast, but very little difficulty was encountered getting under way again on the mainland . . . The trek cross-country started. It was uneventful for most and with the exception of an expected number of repairs, such as flat tires, clutches to adjust, leaking oil lines, and broken axles, they proceeded on schedule. Ordnance had told them [the battalion motor pool personnel] that they could expect a ten per cent loss of vehicles for this trip. That would have been 16 trucks. The battalion score was only one truck, left behind because of faulty brakes, an ordnance repair job which would require many



hours to repair. Driving of this vehicle might have proved disastrous over a tough mountain stretch if it accompanied the convoy, so it was left for repairs the first night of the four-day trip.

As soon as it arrived at Salerno via its make-shift truck convoy, the 727th was speedily made aware of its Italian duties. It was to relieve the 192nd Railway Operating Group of the British, and operate the railway lines between San Giovanni Barra at Naples and Agropoli, the line between Battipaglia and Potenza, and another between Nocera Inferiore and Avellino.

We were to support the American Fifth and a part of the British Eighth from the Salerno beaches and the port of Naples. It was an exacting job army headquarters had entrusted to us, and would have been almost impossible if it had not been for our "on-the-job" experience in North Africa and Sicily.

At this time the situation in Italy, or the "big picture," as we called it was as follows: Britain's Eighth Army, after biting into the toe and heel of Italy from the Straits of Messina, had advanced rapidly up the Italian coasts to meet the German armies that were rushed south to hold them. The American Fifth Army established itself to stay. Mussolini had fallen from power, and part of Italy had gone over to the Allied side. The Germans had withdrawn to a line north of the Volturno River—the same river where Company "A" was accomplishing its bridge-building operation. The two armies (Fifth and Eighth) established a new line approximately 30 miles north of Naples and across Italy.

One factor that helped in our early days in Italy was the fact that when we were off duty (which was seldom enough), it was possible to get out of the rain. Headquarters and Service Company and Company "B" were billeted in a schoolhouse, while Company "C" stayed in a former Italian barracks, which they left considerably cleaner than they found it.

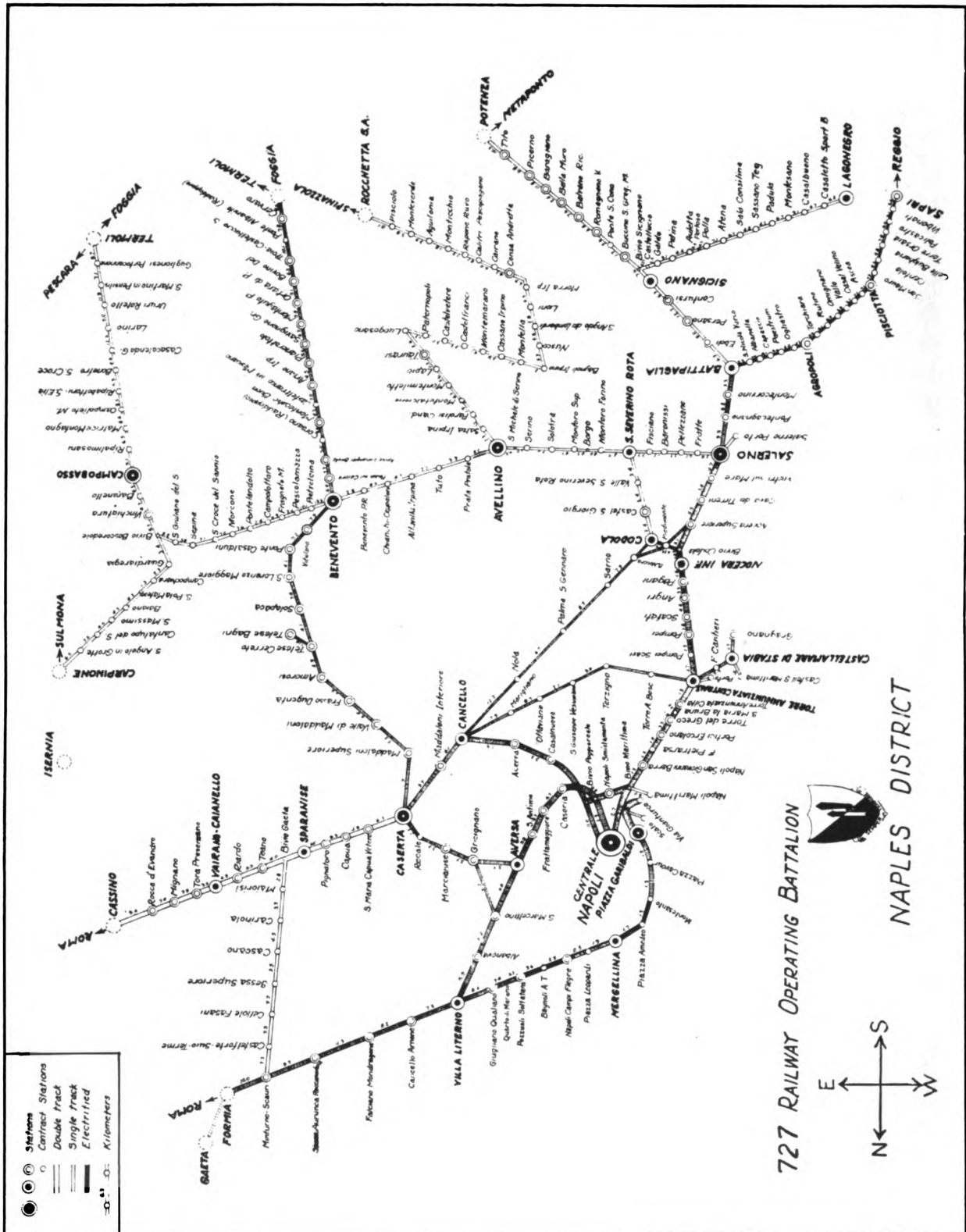
After a brief period of "taking it easy" on

sight-seeing tours, and an occasional movie in Palermo, in Sicily, the battalion was once more matching Company "A" in volume of work accomplished. In our first five days of Italian operation out of Salerno, we averaged 4,700 gross tons daily, exclusive of passenger trains in operation. This accomplishment was the more remarkable inasmuch as we were working over new track, utilizing scraps of information from Italian officials and referring to hasty notes prepared by the British outfit we had relieved.

On November 25th, more recognition for individual members of the 727th came through. Soldier's Medals for heroism in extinguishing a fire which threatened an entire yard and ammo area in Fiumetorto, Sicily, were awarded to 1st Lt. David M. Perkins and Sgt. Millard M. Bartlett. Sgt. Allen C. Metzger was awarded the Legion of Merit for outstanding work in repairing locomotives, roundhouses, and cars. Significantly enough, Sgt. Metzger was raised in Altoona, Pennsylvania, home of the country's largest railroad repair shops.

In the final month of the year, the 727th did something a little different from sweating out foreign roads in the vital job of supplying a fighting army. The work went on, of course, but in their spare time, 22 of our men, sparked by Cpl. William Allen and M/Sgt. Ken Phillips, planned and prepared a minstrel show to be presented for the battalion's entertainment some time around Christmas Day. The swanky Salerno Opera House was the only possibility for an auditorium, but it had already been booked for December 24-25. However, the Special Service Officer for the Salerno area agreed to turn the Opera House over to the 727th for an Allied Show from December 27th through the 31st, in which our own minstrels and an English variety show provided the evenings' entertainment.

The house was jammed to the rafters every night with troops from the area. The performance was given on New Year's Eve for several hundred British and American combat troops who had returned to Salerno for hospitalization.







*An over-all view of the Rome yards.*

December marked the end of the first year of the battalion's overseas services. The following month the port of Naples and its yards and rail installations were assigned to our outfit, and for good measure the 160 miles of inland line and 150 miles of coast line south of Agropoli. Company "C" hoped their new billets, in one of the large naval buildings, would hold together better than did their former billets at Salerno, which collapsed in a heap one day. This was shortly after Company "C", having observed similar cracks and reading them as handwriting on the wall, condemned their quarters and moved out. Headquarters, Service and Company "B" moved into the south wing of the Francisco Bizzaro macaroni plant.

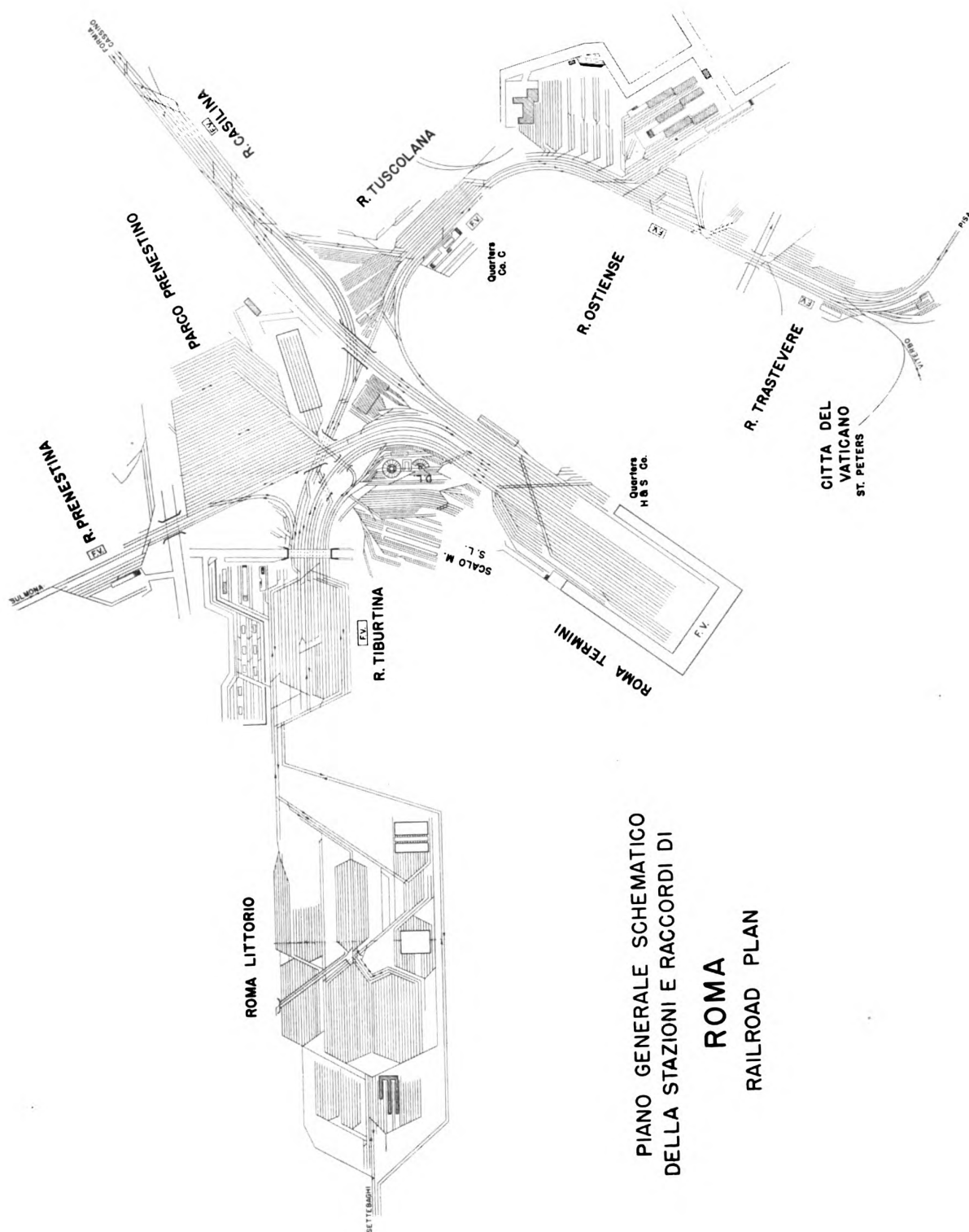
Naples was a maze of trackage and docks, the layout of which we had to become familiar with while figuring out means to increase its operating capacity quickly. The Fifth Army needed all the supplies that could be brought up to it. Coal unloading piers were put into operation, and more than 100 coal cars loaded daily. Troopships, while welcome, were a real transport problem. During one period approximately 12,000 troops were arriving and being whisked to the front daily. Hospital trains were filled with trench foot cases as well as wounded from the front. Freight tonnage went up to 22,000 a day.



*Historic Palazzo Venezia, showing the balcony from which Mussolini dished out his bunk.*

Manpower was desperately needed because the battalion was operating over a wide area, every section of which was in continuous need of supplies.

On March 4th we received relief, the 719th



PIANO GENERALE SCHEMATICO  
DELLA STAZIONI E RACCORDI DI  
**ROMA**  
RAILROAD PLAN





*The yards at Naples harbor. None of buildings in the background escaped damage from shelling.*

R.O.B. arriving to take charge of rail movements in the Salerno region. As we prepared to pull out of that area and were relinquishing operating control of the line, a strange and terrible disaster occurred in a railroad tunnel near Baragiano in southern Italy.

Probably never in the history of railroading has there been a catastrophe such as occurred at Balvano, on March 5, 1944. Early that morning, a freight train with two locomotives left Balvano enroute to the south coast of Italy. As always, the train was literally crawling with some 500 trespassers on their way to Bari, Brindisi, and Taranto to purchase foodstuffs, oil, etc., for ultimate sale on the black markets of Salerno,



*Wreckage in Ostiense yards, Rome, 1944.*

Naples and numerous other central Italian cities.

A short distance south of Balvano, the train entered one of the many tunnels in that territory. When all but the last two cars were inside



*The same old story: Smistamento yards, Rome, 1944.*



*The puzzle at Naples yard.*



*Mussolini's own station, Ostiense yards.*

the tunnel, the drivers of the locomotives began to slip, apparently due to water dripping from the tunnel roof onto the rails. Then the engine

## *Vesuvius Takes a Hand*



*Vesuvius exploded and drowned out the war. The eruption of March 18, 1944, as seen from Naples, dwarfed the great Allied aerial and artillery bombardment of Cassino 50 miles to the north . . . Lava pouring down the side of Vesuvius to knock out the funicular railway.*



stalled altogether without any further warning.

The grade of coal being used in that sector of Italy for firing locomotives was poor and contained a large quantity of ash. While the engineer tried desperately to get the train in motion again, smoke pouring from the stack of the engine filled the tunnel with deadly carbon monoxide gas. From that point on, very little is known as to what actually happened, partly because of the very few survivors and partly because of contradictory accounts of the incident given by these survivors.

The toll of life was terrific. The station platform at Balvano was stacked high with the bodies of those who had been on the train. The final count of the dead was 508. All apparently had died without being aware of being in any danger, inasmuch as there was no evidence of panic or of attempts to leave the cars in which they were riding. Some died in their sleep; others



*Ashes from Vesuvius at a station near Naples.*

were found sitting up as if only lost in thought.

The victims were interred in mass burials near the village of Balvano. Many of the bodies were identified by grief-stricken relatives and friends. Many were never identified.

There were no U. S. Army personnel involved in the accident. Operation of the railroads in that sector of Italy had by then reverted com-



*Naples and Vesuvius before the eruption.*



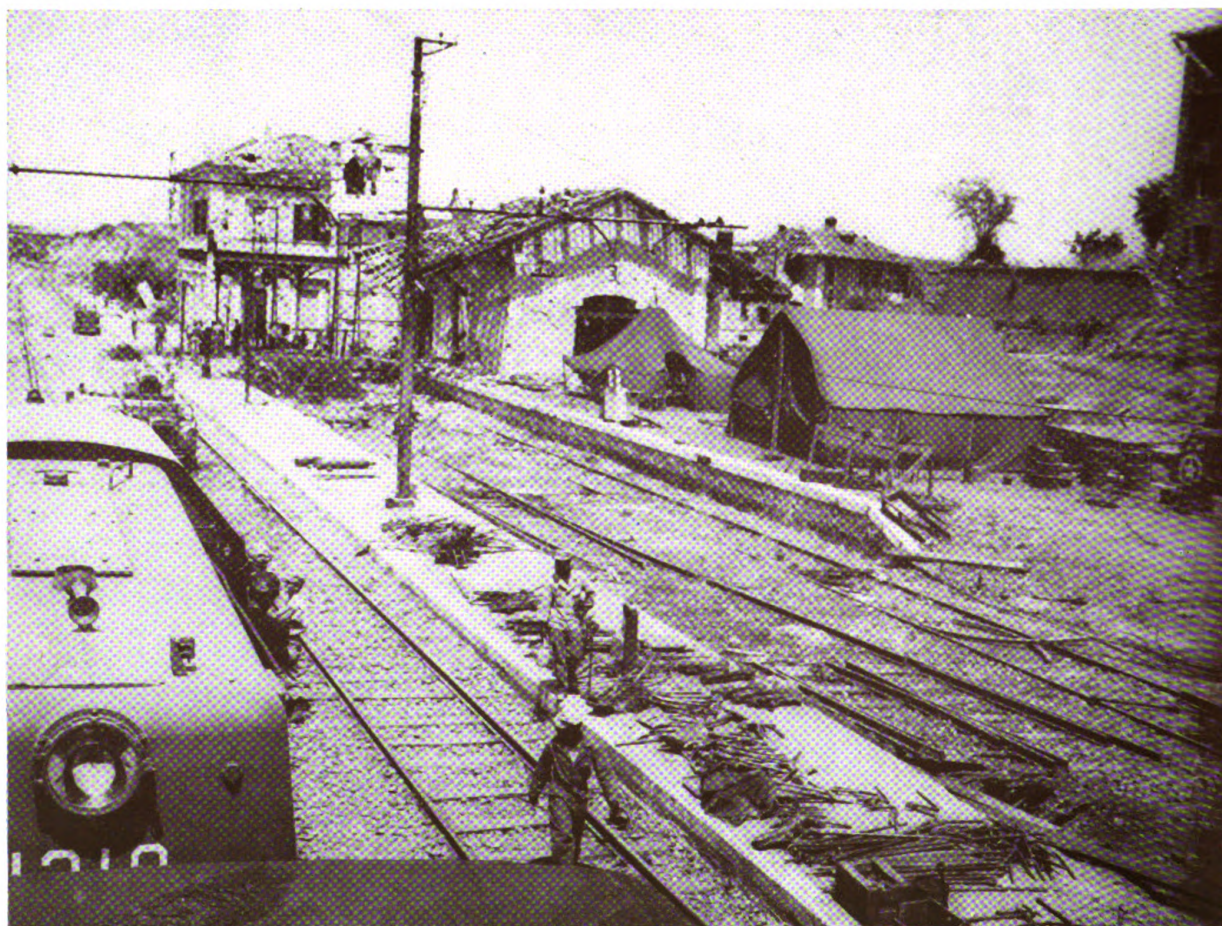


(Above) A diesel collision south of Rome . . . (Below) Campo Leon, a junction point between Rome and Anzio.

pletely to the Italian State Railways. In an attempt to determine the facts surrounding the

catastrophe, General Gray appointed a board of five officers, headed by Lt. Col. Okie, to make a formal investigation. The board met at Salerno. Language difficulties made the procedure slow. The entire testimony was recorded by Sgt. Frovick. In two days all of the railroad men at Salerno even remotely connected with the accident had been questioned. With Italian railroad officials the board got ready to start on a trip to contact all others concerned and to visit the scene of the accident.

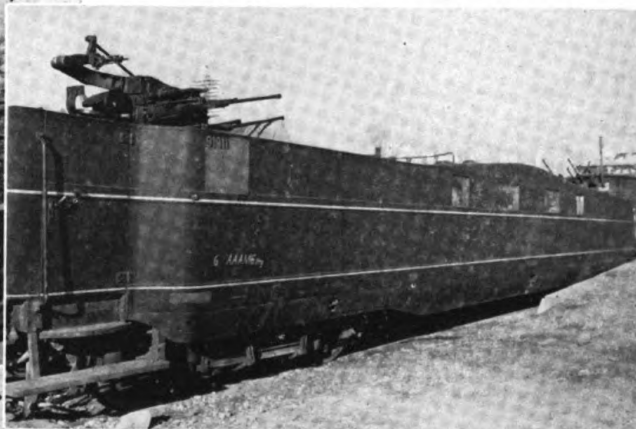
At Pontecagnano, Balvano, Baragiano, and several other points along the way, Italian railroad men who had information regarding the accident were interrogated. The board of inquiry inspected the tunnel itself and made notations, questioned Italians regarding tunnel ventilation, track condition in damp weather, and







(Above) Naples yard . . . (Below) Naples roundhouse before and after repairs . . . (Right) A very dead loco.



Once upon a time, back when things looked good for the Axis, Adolph showed his great esteem and affection for Benito by giving him a private car deluxe. Stories and pictures about this great event hit the newspapers all over the world at the time. Since Benito had stepped on the toes of a few people on various occasions, it was necessary that his private car be well-armed.

Now this same armor is coming in very handy for the MRS. For some reason, the retreating Germans failed to destroy Benito's car, and the Americans found it and turned it into a flak car. The above pictures show how the four-barrelled anti-aircraft cannon were fitted after the roof had been cut out to accommodate them.

Attached to trains carrying Allied military supplies to the front, Benito's car now is a pain in the neck to the aviators of Benito's pal Adolph.



previous similar difficulties with locomotives. In the meantime, a similar accident had occurred in a tunnel further south, near Baragiano. Although there was but one fatality reported, the board was ordered to investigate this accident also. After traveling as far as Taranto, at the extreme southern end of Italy, the board returned to Naples. The stenographic record-

To complete a disastrous month, old Mt. Vesuvius, which had been smoking away in comparative contentment for many years, like an old man with a good pipe, blew its top on March 18th, and erupted lava and ash for six straight days and nights. Railway traffic between Naples and Salerno was suspended for several days because the tracks became covered with



(Left) A typical Italian wartime civilian passenger train. (Right) A few of the more than 500 corpses taken from the Italian passenger train which stalled



in a tunnel at Balvano on the Potenza line, suffocating almost all on board. The accident was never really explained.

ing of the investigation was transcribed, duplicated and forwarded to General Gray.

Although the investigation included testimony of dozens of Italian railroad officials and employes, as well as U. S. Army personnel, little was actually brought to light as to the cause of the accident and responsibility therefor. After a careful review by General Gray and his staff, it was officially termed "An Act of God."

There were almost nightly air raids. On March 15th, that part of the battalion stationed in Naples was caught in one that lasted 45 minutes, the target being the harbor area. One bomb blew the side and roof off the building in which motor-pool personnel were asleep. There were many lucky escapes, but lucky stars went to Pvt. Doyle West, who had just moved his cot from one side to the other of the little box car in which he slept. Seconds after he had done so a large bomb fragment tore through the roof and floor at the spot where his cot had stood.

cinders at Nocera Inferiore. Nearly 700 freight cars were backed up north of Torre Anunziata and in San Giovanni yard as a result of the eruption.

Preparatory to their taking over port and yard operation in a part of the Naples area Italians were put to work in April. May and most of June passed in comparative quiet, but with long days and nights of work. There were rumors of another shift.

June saw us moving up to the "Eternal City." Rome was the proud capital from which Benito Mussolini had boasted that under Fascism *his* trains ran on time. Now, protected by the Germans in Northern Italy, Mussolini must have wondered at the poor hand dealt him by the fortunes of war. Here were American railroaders making Italian trains run on time without the benefits of *Fascismo*.

A glance at the record showed good work. From January to July our tonnage figures out of



Naples were marked at 245,000 for January and 492,000 for June, with a grand total for six months of 2,725,165 tons. More than 900 cars had been moved out of the base port in one day, in addition to movements arriving from the south. As many as 27 freight trains were made ready for operation daily out of the port's main yard to railheads and other outlying districts.

Our new job called for the taking over and operating of the West Coast Lines from the vicinity of Anzio, the original diversionary beachhead that was so costly to take and hold, through Rome and then north to as close to the front lines as possible. Capt. Connerat, Capt. Mauney and Lt. Perkins reconnoitered the area with a party of men and the battalion followed them on June 21st.

It was a fast-moving front for several reasons. Northern France had been invaded by all the might the Allied Expeditionary Force had been able to assemble in England. Names like St. Lo and Cherbourg were headlines in our *Yank* and *Stars and Stripes*. The Fifth Army had captured Mt. Cassino, joined our forces at Anzio, and moved straight into and through the city of Rome. German armies were now withdrawing rapidly, so rapidly that their previously thorough demolition technique was limited to bridges and tunnels.

As fast as possible the Fifth Army was opening railheads to the north. Our operating distances lengthened rapidly until the Germans managed to stabilize a previously prepared line in the vicinity of Pisa. All of our companies except "B" were now stationed in Rome. That company remained in Naples to service locomotives for other railroad battalions.

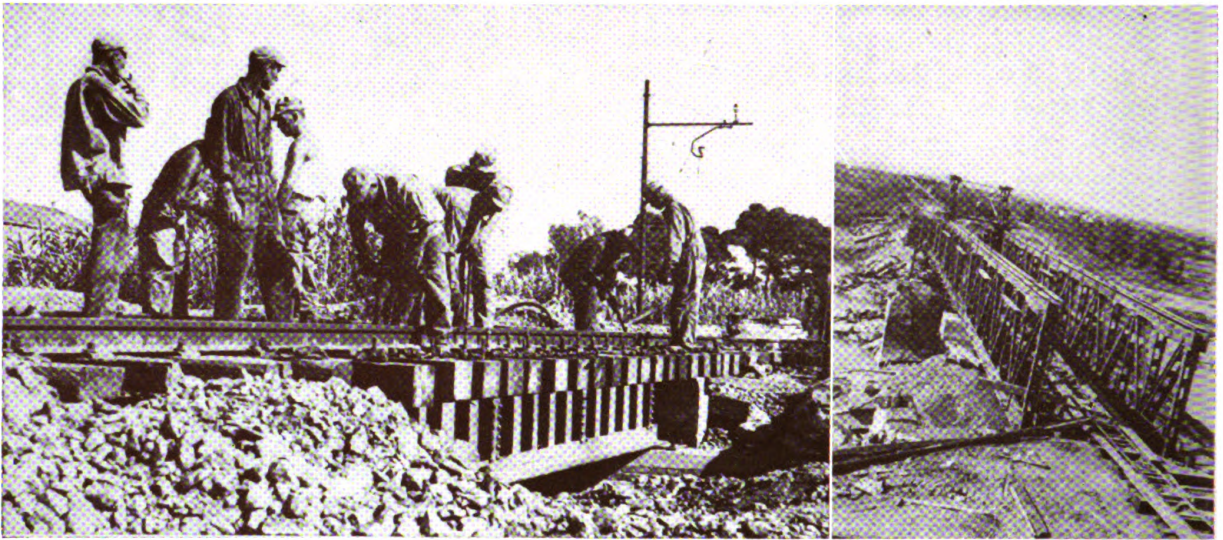
By the end of the month, the 727th was operating about 150 miles of main track that included the territory of Porto Nettuno, through Rome to Grosseto. In July, we handled 211,000 tons and 531 trains. Company "A" went back to earning more bridge-building laurels by beginning a 320-foot bridge which would open the main line to Leghorn. Reports reached us from

Naples that Company "B" was duplicating the main effort in its own special way by turning 317 electric locomotives and 1,350 steam locomotives per month in the roundhouses there.

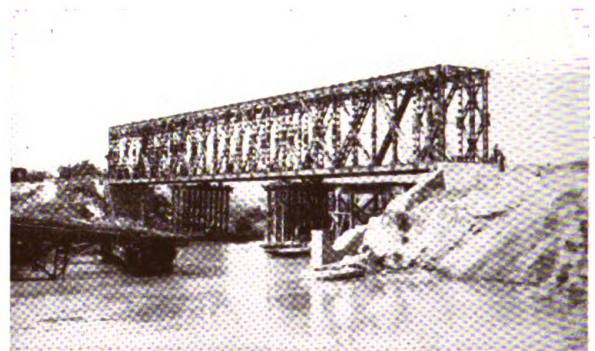
In September we again received movement orders, and spent the middle of the month going through the familiar pattern of preparing for shipment by water. Company "A" preceded the battalion to France by a week, to repair a bridge near Romans which army engineers had passed up. On September 27th, the remainder of the 727th left Naples, sailed north between Corsica and Sardinia, and anchored in the harbor of Marseille two days later.

One memorable incident that happened at Naples before sailing will be long remembered, particularly by the members of Headquarters Company. Supply Sergeant Beverly Younger, veteran of World War I and life-long resident of Los Angeles definitely did not care for salt water. During the water trips Beverly could always be found in his bunk. The unusual part of his seasickness wasn't that he was the first one to be sick but that it stayed with him all during the voyages. At Naples there was considerable delay in loading the ships for Marseille and Toulon. While most of the men were reading, sleeping, or engaging in bull sessions waiting for their time to load, the pride and joy of Los Angeles was anticipating his trip with little enjoyment by feeding the fishes from Naples docks for hours before he set foot on the gangplank.

Shipping the motor pool equipment provided another odd incident. To load the motor pool equipment the 727th was assigned a British Liberty ship. About the time that loading operations were to start there was a strike among the regular native loaders. A crew of inexperienced civilians were put to work and their first task was loading six heavy tanks in the hold. After these were stowed away the motor pool equipment was secured below decks and the lighter recons and jeeps were set on deck. The six tanks were quite forgotten until the rough waters between Corsica and Sardinia. A



*(Top left) Sgt. Kadinger and squad at work near Cecina . . . (Top right) A Roth-Wagner bridge under construction . . . (Right) The bridge over the Garigliano River constructed by Co. "A."*



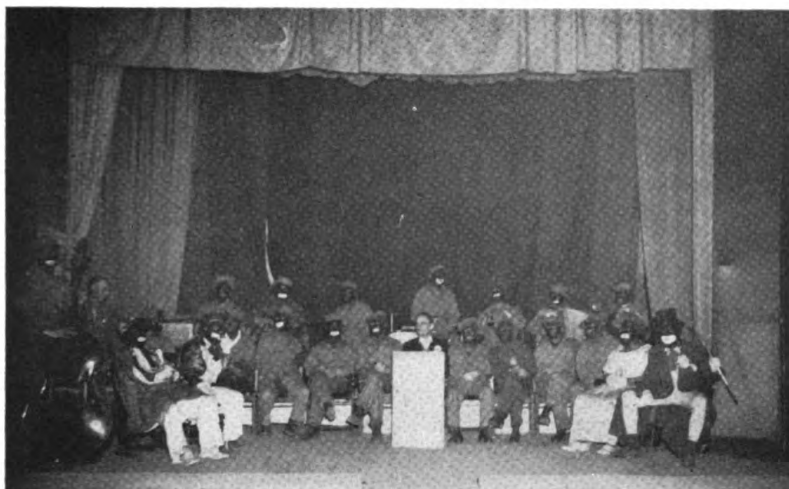
*A bridge at Capua which was built by Co. "A."*



*Unloading a hospital train at Naples. Two hospital trains daily were run from Cassino.*







The 727th Minstrels on stage. Their show at Naples and Salerno was a huge success during Christmas week, 1943. The general thought it slightly rough... The program for the show (above and left).



727th THE MINSTRELS	
Staged and Produced by VAHLEB	
CART	MUSICAL NUMBERS
INTERLOCUTOR - Gp William Allen	1. OPENING MINSTREL SONG From Cast
END NEW ROUTINE - Pte Walter Worry	(Sung by Tt Elmer Family)
BOYS - Tt Paul Green	2. • WHITE CHRISTMAS • H & S Quartet
RANSUM BROWN - Tt Jack Martin	3. • ALL OR NOTHING AT ALL • Tt Robert Burns
GEORGE WASHIN - Tt Joe Bonnett	4. SELECTIONS - Choir & Audience
GLOB MARE PHASE - Mtp Kenneth Phillips	5. • SILENT NIGHT •
SOLOISTS, QUARTETTES, CHOIR TENDERS	6. • SILENT NIGHT •
CHOR TENDERS	7. • TEARS ON MY PILLOW • Tt George Anderson
BARTONES	8. SELECTIONS - Pte Herbert Hudson
BASSES	9. SELECTION PIANO SOLO Pte Herbert Cury
PIANIST	10. • SUNDAY, MONDAY, OR ALWAYS • Co • B • Quartette
MINSTREL DVE BOMBERS	11. • YOU'LL NEVER KNOW • Pte Myron Andrews
TRUMPET	12. • OLD BLACK JOE • Tt Wm. Evans
CLARINET	13. • FINALE • Pte Carl Bala
VIOLIN	14. • FINALE • Pte Carl Bala
BAK	15. • FINALE • Pte Carl Bala
GUITAR	16. • FINALE • Pte Carl Bala



"H & S" and "B" Co. billets at Salerno, Nov., 1943.



C - O - P - Y

U. S. SECRET equals British SECRET

Allied Force  
MILITARY RAILWAY SERVICE  
Office of Director General

File: 330.13 A. P. O. 400  
24 April 1944

Subject: Commendation.

To

- Commanding Officer, 701st Railway Grand Division, APO 400, USArmy
- Commanding Officer, 703rd Railway Grand Division, APO 400, USArmy
- Commanding Officer, 713th Railway Operating Battalion, APO 400, USArmy
- Commanding Officer, 715th Railway Operating Battalion, APO 400, USArmy
- Commanding Officer, 719th Railway Operating Battalion, APO 400, USArmy
- ➔ Commanding Officer, 727th Railway Operating Battalion, APO 400, USArmy
- Commanding Officer, 753rd Railway Shop Battalion, APO 400, USArmy
- Commanding Officer, 760th Railway Diesel Shop Battalion, APO 400, USAr
- Commanding Officer, 794th Military Police Battalion, APO 400, USArmy
- Commanding Officer, 2682nd Base Depot Co, TC, Prov, APO 400, USArmy

1. The following quoted cablegram has been received from General Stewart of AFHQ:

"Congratulations to the officers and men of PBS, Royal Navy and MRS on performance of Naples Ports during the 24 hour period ending at 1500 hours 20 April. The discharge of 33142 tons of cargo, 494 vehicles and a clearance from the ports of 29161 tons of cargo constitutes an all time record for this theater and is probably an all time record for all theaters. The discharge and clearance of this tremendous tonnage is positive proof of sound organization, excellent planning and superior execution. It also indicates perfect coordinati and splendid cooperation between all agencies of PBS, Royal Navy and MRS. The efficiency indicated by this performance reflects great credit on all officers and men concerned and is an assurance to our combat forces that the steady flow of supplies essential to their operation will continue."

2. Military Railway Service actually handled 871 loads or 12,659 net tons of this total clearance from the port of 29,161 tons of cargo. This represents the phenomenal figure of 44.06% of the total clearance being handled by rail.

3. The Director General adds his congratulations to each and every member of Military Railway Service for this fine accomplishment.

By command of Brigadier General GRAY:

/s/ S. R. Beggs  
/t/ S. R. Beggs  
Major, T.C.  
Adjutant

cc: Heads of Departments

U. S. SECRET Equals British SECRET

C - O - P - Y

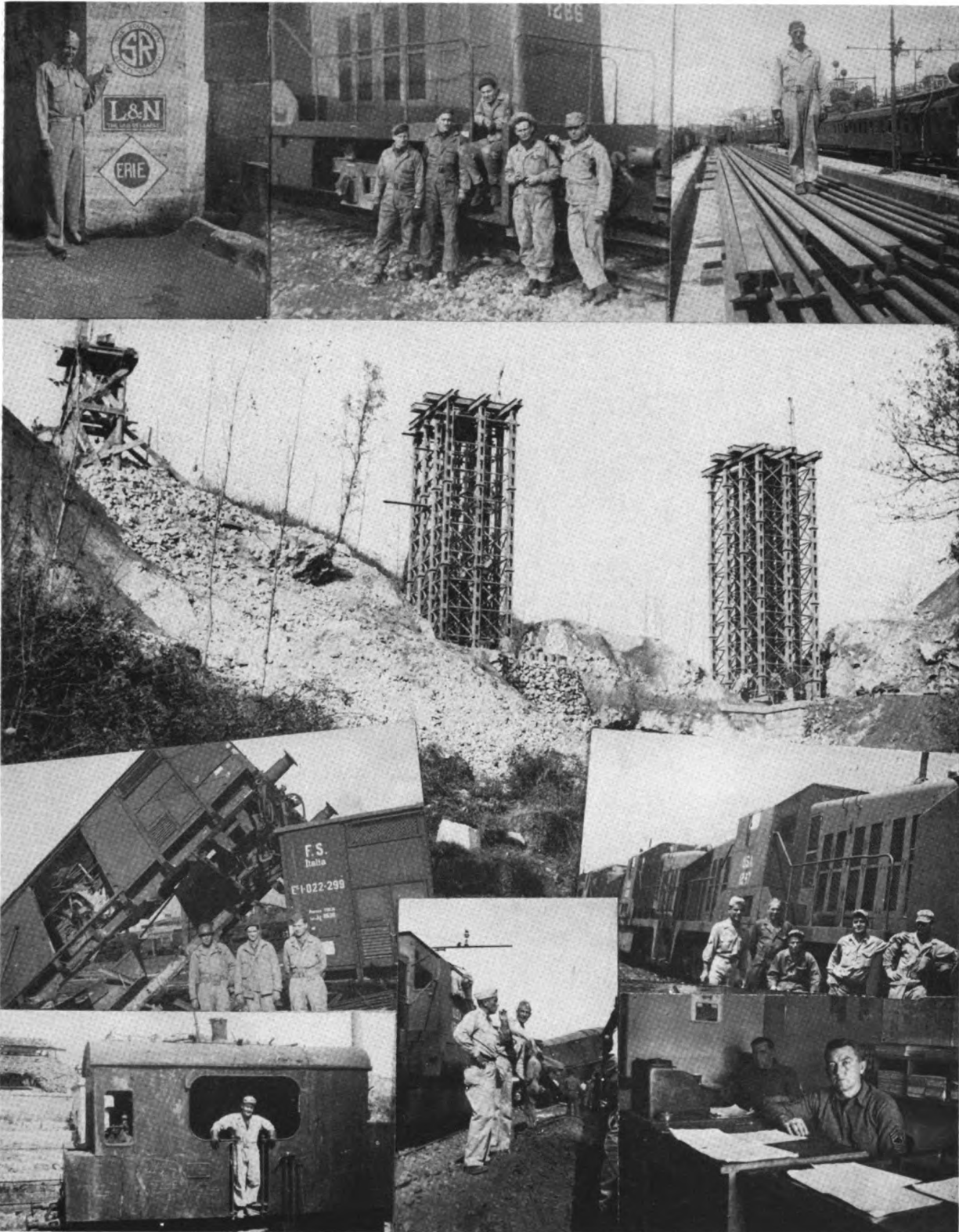
(Above) The commendation we got from the Chief of Transportation, Allied Force Headquarters, for our share in the brilliant performance of the MRS in moving supplies up to the front just before the climactic battle for Cassino . . . (Right) What better evidence would one need than this of Capt. E. E. Jacobson's painless dentistry? The demonstration is being given in Italy in January, 1944.

(Center, p. 65) Rebuilding blown out bridges . . . (Top) Lt. Perkins inspects American railroad symbols on a bridge girder at Civitavecchia . . . Pfc Dupee, T/5 Dunagan, Sgt. Richey, T/4 Helvey, Sgt. Gebhardt at Naples . . . S/Sgt. C. R. Fewlass standing on 150-ft. Italian rails . . . (Below, l to r) T/4 Swander, Pfc Poulos, T/4 Flynn at Salerno . . . T/4 Carnevale, Sgt. Goerndt, Pfc McCann, T/4 Conrick, T/5 Hartman in Potenza . . . T/4 E. L. Kearney, Naples . . . Capt. Mauney and Lt. Col. Okie at a wreck near Rome . . . M/Sgt. J. H. Carlin and S/Sgt. H. L. Gibson on a dispatching train at Naples.

storm came up that night and three of the tanks broke loose, shifting to the starboard side. The ship lurched and those asleep were dumped from their makeshift berths to the decks. It was then impossible to get the tanks back to their

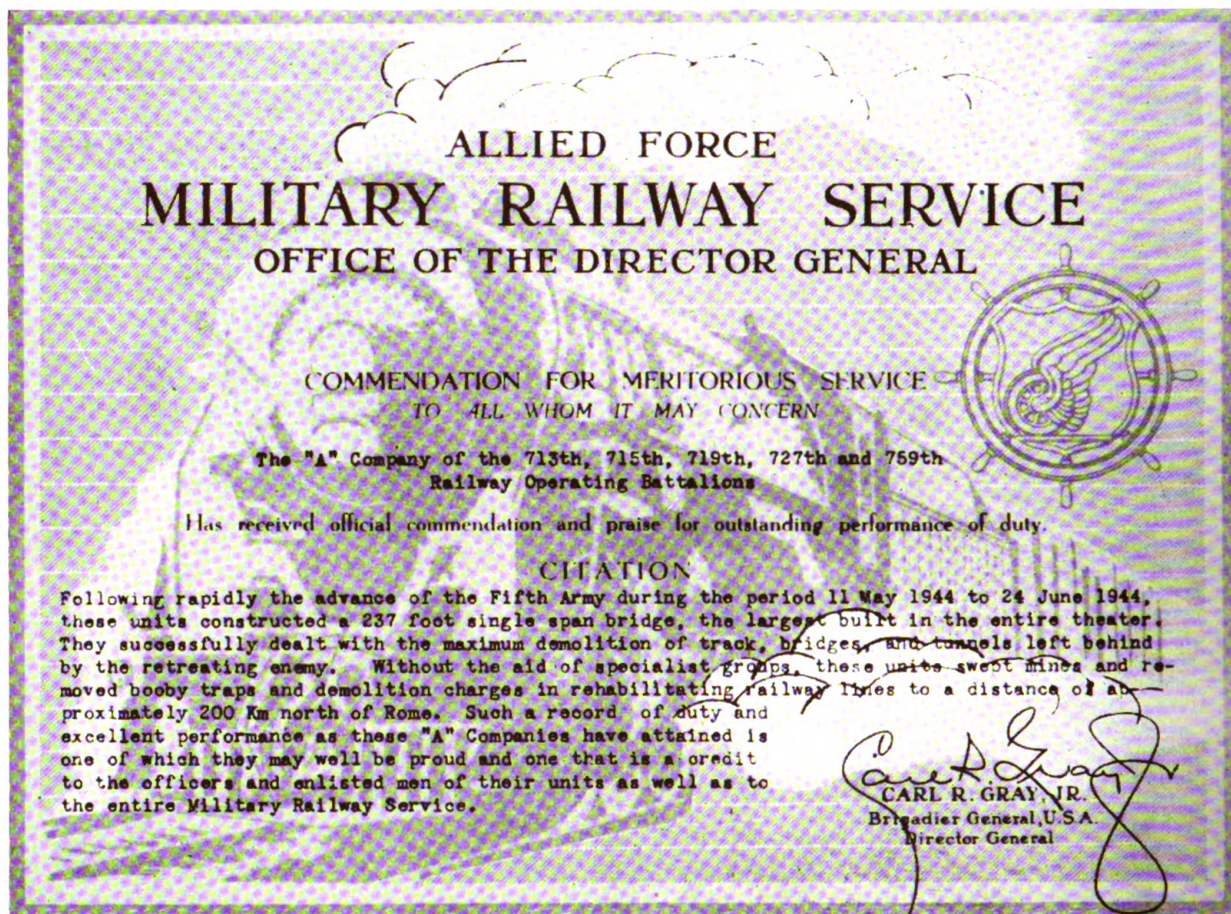




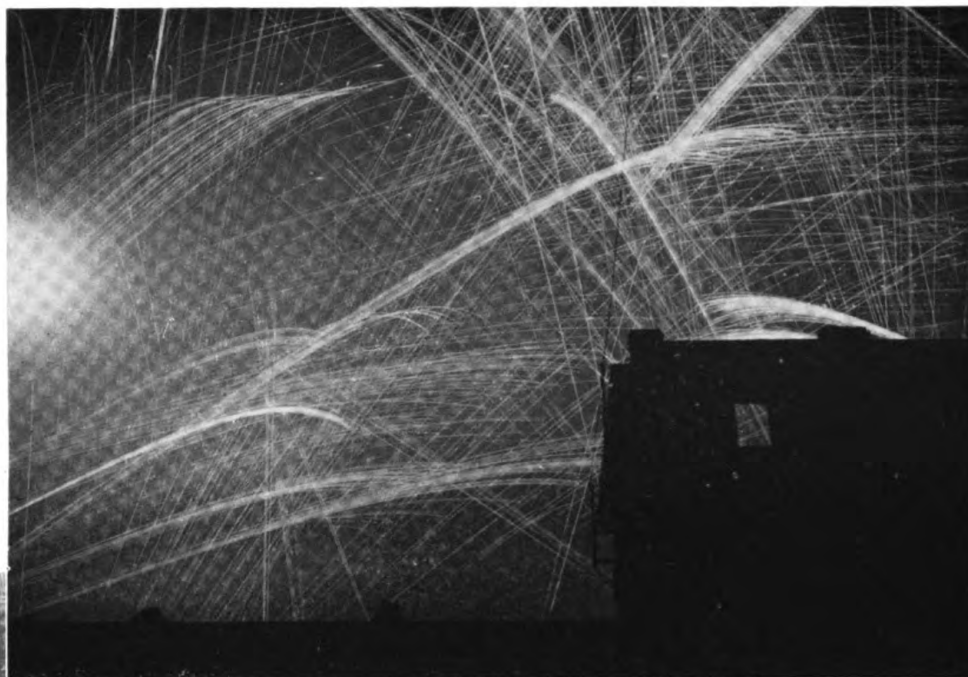




## *A Word of Praise*







*Antiaircraft fire at night, Naples, during big Nazi aerial attack of March 15, 1944 . . . Troops ready to ship to the front from Naples . . . (P. 66) Gen. Gray*

*decorating Lt. Perkins, Sgts. Bartlett, Baird ("H & S"), Denson (Co. "A"), and Metzger (Co. "B") . . . The Fifth Army plaque awarded the 727th.*

former positions and until they were unloaded at Toulon the remainder of the trip for that particular ship was a lopsided voyage.

Italy, with all its dirt, dust, combat and beauty, was now part of our history. The Nazi

was on the run, and there was no man who watched the shoreline of Italy fade away but who hoped that we would keep him on the run until the war was over and won. The 727th would then be homeward bound at last.

## Bill Bajada

**I**N a battalion of 847 men it is unlikely that one will find one man, with the exception of the top officers, who is known to all the officers and men. However, there was one man—an enlisted man—who was known to all by sight or at least by reputation. He was William “No Middle Initial” Bajada.

Bill was a short, thin, quick-tempered GI, born and raised on the island of Malta. During his teens Bill came to America to live with a brother in New York City. Before leaving Europe he spent several months travelling through Italy and France seeing the wonders of Naples, Pompei, Rome, Marseille and Paris.

He entered the service and went overseas early in 1942. He was transferred to the 727th in December, 1943, while the battalion was at Salerno, Italy.

His ability as an interpreter was unsurpassed. Unlike most interpreters, who can only translate the spoken word, Bill could speak, read and write English, Italian, French, three different Arab tongues, and the slang expressions of the Sicilians thrown in for good measure. His presence at joint meetings between military and civilian railway officials, at accidents such as the incident at Balvano, Italy, and on the investigations which followed were not only familiar but expected events. His previous trips to points of interest in Naples and Rome saved many hours of valuable time for the GIs with whom Bill travelled and for whom he acted as interpreter on his off-duty time.

It has often been said that a fellow doesn't kid or play practical jokes on you unless he really has a liking for you. Bill must have been liked by all because he was the butt of many practical jokes.

In the spring of 1944 he thought he would like to visit his family and requested a two-week pass to Malta. He was informed that he would have to have sufficient money to cover all expenses to and from Malta before he could get his pass. Finding himself

short of cash, he mentioned it to some of his buddies who promptly told him to “see the chaplain.” Bill took this advice seriously and relied on one of his associates to get the chaplain on the phone. After a twenty-minute discourse on his proposed trip he was informed by the “chaplain” that as soon as Bill had his pass he was quite sure he could assist him on the financial end of it. Bill was in a spot—he couldn't get the pass without the money and couldn't get the money without the pass. After Bill had worried sufficiently, his buddies came through with the necessary greenbacks and Bill's request to fly to Malta was granted. Before he left, he again had a call from the “chaplain” offering his assistance and \$100 of his personal funds. This act alone put “Chaplain Jones” at the top of Bill's list of “good guys.” Bill thanked him again and again for his offer and continued for months afterwards to rave on about what a good job the army chaplains were doing.

He never met “Chaplain Jones” and until he reads this he probably never guessed that it was another practical joke and that “Chaplain Jones” was a T/5 in the medical detachment.

On another occasion, in Naples, Bill complained about the food not being up to the standards of his former outfit. Asked why he didn't put in for a transfer back to this unit he replied, “I think I will.” He had no desire to do this except to emphasize his complaint and immediately forgot about it. However, the wheels started turning; blank stationery was sent down from higher headquarters, a fake special order was cut and mimeographed, then distributed to “all concerned.” Bill was called in by the personnel officer, handed copies of the orders, told how his work had been appreciated, that he would be missed and that the adjutant wanted to see him directly. The adjutant added his polite remarks and informed him that the executive officer wanted to see him. The major didn't say much more than the others except that the motor



Bill Bajada, at St. Peter's, Rome.



pool had called and wanted Bill to know they would have a recon ready at 1830 and would he have his bags and equipment ready.

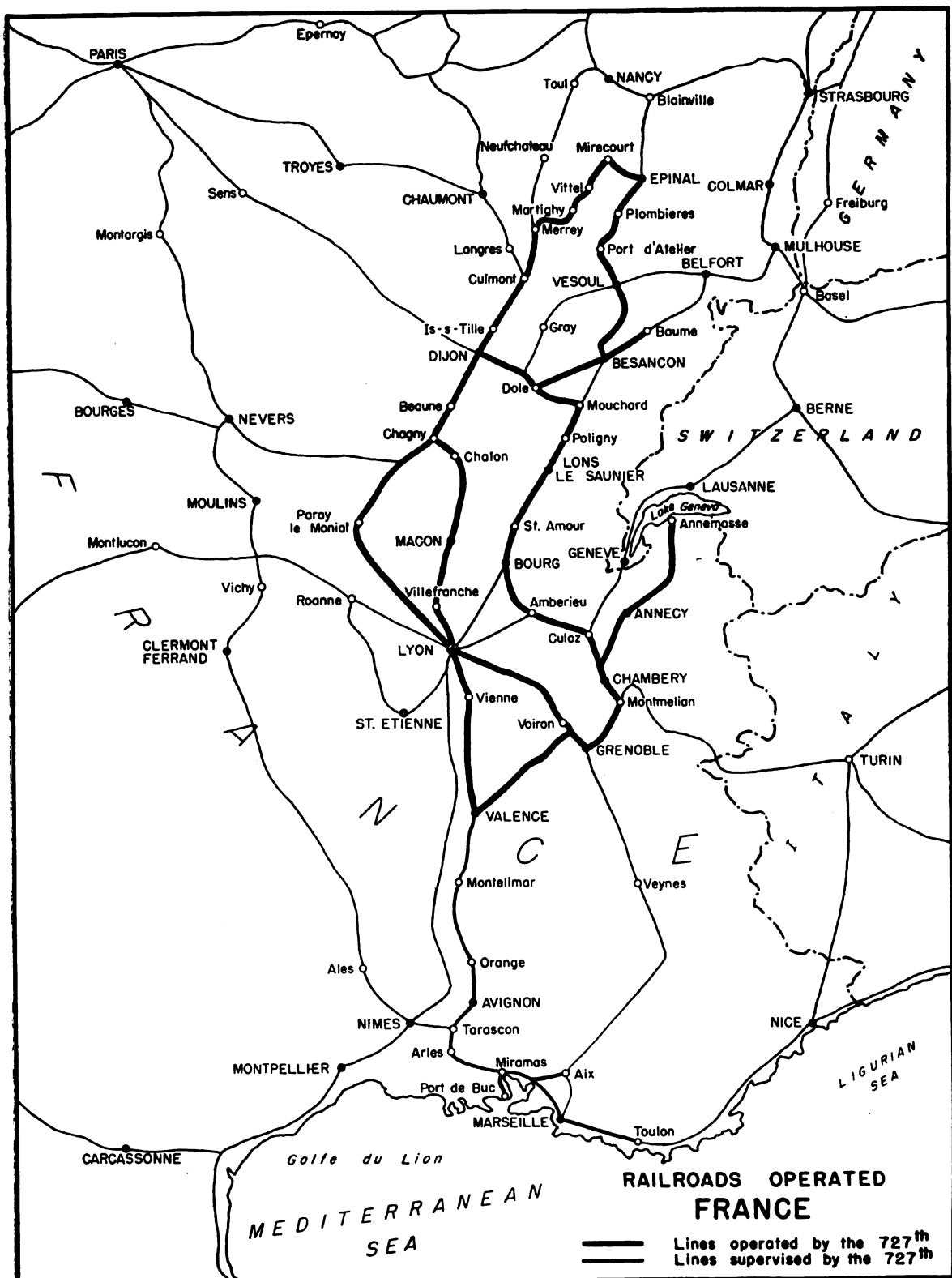
By now it was time to go to chow and everyone including Bill headed for the mess hall. Word had been spread around about the transfer and all wished Bill "Good Luck." As expected, Bill put about six

hours between 1830 and the time he returned to his quarters.

The next morning orders came down to move the whole battalion to Rome. Bill's individual transfer was forgotten in the excitement. From then on, as far as Bill was concerned, the headquarters company cooks were the best damn cooks in the ETO.



*Our last glimpse of Italy: Naples with Mt. Vesuvius smoking quietly in the background, Sept. 1944.*







# France

## SUPPORTING THE SOUTHERN INVASION

### *Railroading to the Rhine*

WE landed at the ancient harbor town of Marseille, on the Gulf of Lion, in mid-afternoon of September 29th. The old church of Notre Dame shone in the sun at the top of Steep Street, one of the real crossroads of the world. Having learned how in POE preparation days in the States, the 727th went over the side on landing nets and travelled to shore in amphibious craft.

We did not spend much time in the city, soon taking off in troop trains for our eventual destination, the city of Lyon. Our train was sidetracked for several hours in Avignon, one of the centers of painting and once the place of exile of the Popes. We arrived at Lyon a few minutes before midnight at the end of September.

It seemed good to have a change of scenery and an opportunity to learn first hand of the habits and customs of another illustrious nation. We began picking up a few handy phrases which were calculated to help us get some trains rolling. The little language guides the Army issued about this time proved handy aids.

The overall picture was changing fast. General Patch with his Seventh Army and the French First Army had invaded southern France on August 15th. This landing show was

witnessed by Britain's Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, chewing his inevitable cigar. Within three days the success of the landing was assured. Intelligence had discovered weak spots in the German setup in southern France, and the Allied forces had hit them at lightly defended areas around St. Tropez, St. Maxime and St. Raphael.

The Nazis were undone primarily because their defenses had not anticipated the mobility and fast-jabbing striking power the Western Allies' military machine was now capable of unleashing. Strong defenses around Nice, Cannes, Toulon and Marseille were almost useless when the Allies crashed through the light beach fortifications, and quickly drove inland to encircle these main defenses.

Insofar as the transportation picture was concerned, it soon became clear that we had not been brought to France merely to enjoy the view. Supply lines were extending from 50, 100, 300 and up to 400 miles inland. Mechanization, which had accomplished much, now posed this problem: where to get gasoline to run the trucks, tanks and weapons carriers that were taking the Seventh into the mountainous areas of the Rhone? Gasoline was taking a premium

priority over ammunition, and even—sometimes—food. We had high hopes for this job into *Festung Europa*, and the speed of the advance was exceeding the highest hopes.

Along the beaches, and back up the Durance River Valley the rail lines were in relatively good shape. Fritz had pulled out too fast to do much real damage there. But the Germans, past masters of the art of fighting a delaying action and hamstringing communications and transport as they withdrew, had done a real job in the broad valley of the Rhone. On either side of the river, heavy tonnage lines rolled up from Marseille, greatest port of France, through the heart of the country to Paris. These lines had to be opened because the Alps line along the Durance had heavy grades, and could carry only light tonnage. Light tonnage was inadequate for carrying all the material that the Seventh Army was now calling for.

Therefore, on October 2nd, the 727th was ordered to deploy all available personnel from Lyon, our headquarters, to the railroad lines and establish control over the movement of military supplies. It was a big order, and the 727th got on the job immediately. Our men "took off" with rations and the names of the towns in which they were to operate. Only resourceful and seasoned railroad soldiers could have done this job. In all, there were 17 cities, ranging in size from villages to the large centers such as Dijon and Epinal, where Seventh Army advance headquarters was located. There was also Grenoble, a town which was a Resistance hotbed and seat of the famous Grenoble University where American graduate students came to study French literature in more peaceful times. Company "B," as usual, ran a check on roundhouses to establish the motive power situation.

Winter was making things difficult for our troops. The Rhone River rose to flood stage, recording the highest water mark since 1840. The Saone also went up to record flood stage.

Twice in November the tracks at Domene, near Grenoble, were flooded to such depth that operations over that section of trackage were suspended. But these were not isolated instances. Overflows pulled Company "A" men out to isolated passes and ravines time after time.

Two railroading accomplishments many of us will remember as highlights of the work in France occurred about this time. To expedite handling of priority cars that were to be routed over our 600 miles of track, a form called a "Switch List and Passing Report" was drafted and approved by headquarters for universal use. This made it possible for us to keep track of all our shipments and was of great help to the Seventh Army. Major Mullen established an advance headquarters at Epinal, but even with careful utilization of men, engines and cars, traffic became so heavy that it was necessary to aid the French with 727th personnel from outlying points, where they had been stationed since shortly after their arrival at Lyon.

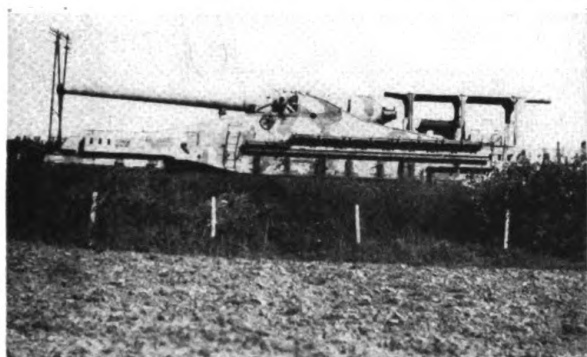
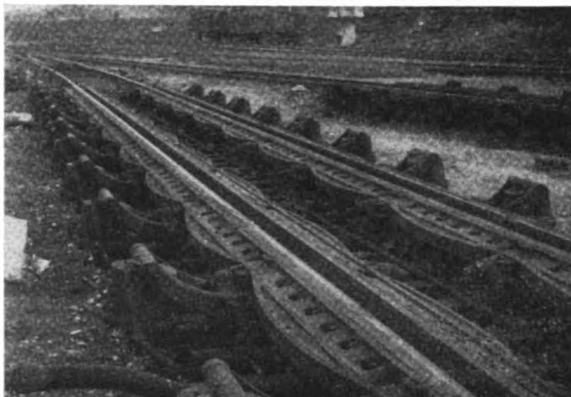
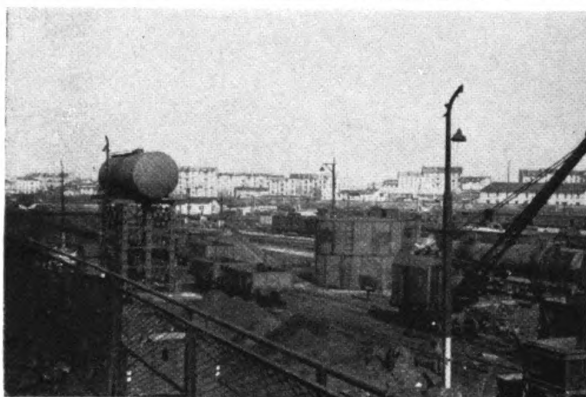
The load was lightened when the 759th Railway Operating Battalion moved into Dijon, and our trackage was cut down to 450 miles. This was easier to administer and operate, as was proven shortly after Christmas when von Rundstedt made his break-through in the now-famous "Battle of the Bulge." Troops and materiel were rushed over our lines, by now well-organized to stand the strain. We had managed to keep 126 trains moving on this territory even when the November floods threatened to wash out the lines. Additional traffic, compared with flood conditions, was almost no problem at all.

The other feat was the construction by members of Company "A," under Capt. Beard, of an 1,800 foot bridge over the Rhone River at Avignon, with the help of a company of army engineers. The proposed bridge was considered necessary to connect the east bank main lines from Marseille with western France and the Spanish border, and with northern lines to Dijon and Paris. Flood conditions and high



winds made the work difficult and dangerous, but it was completed in record time. A steel span over the main channel permitted river boats to pass under it.

ing their heaviest locomotives. But later, after much inspection and the type of hand-waving that goes with any Gallic conversation, they tried it out, and quickly and generously acknowl-



(Top) Roundhouse at Ambergieu, France . . . (Center) La Mouche Yards, Lyon . . . (Bottom) A smaller railroad gun.

(Top) An unusual guard rail encountered in France . . . (Center) French car retarders . . . (Bottom) Roundhouse at Dole.

This feat brought some "ooh-la-la's" from cynical French engineers who did not believe the 1800-foot bridge—an open deck pile and timber bridge trestle—was capable of support-

edged it as a feat *par excellence*. On the strength of this success, "A" Company built a similar bridge at a later date over the Saone River at Seurre, France. Timbers were not available at







*Eiffel Tower, Paris . . . Wrecked bridge 3 miles north of Vallence . . . Trocadero, Paris . . . "To the glory of the Republic"—a monument in Lyon . . . Horse racing, Lyon . . . Two French officers who served as liaison men with the 727th.*

the bridge site, so the men pitched into some forest land near the Swiss border, cut timbers for piling, and hauled them back over wretched roads to the bank of the river where construction was in progress.

December brought us an anniversary—the second year of overseas duty for the 727th. It also brought us our battalion special insignia, which had been developed two years earlier. It was manufactured in Lyon, a city which has a long tradition of good craftsmanship.



*Flood tide on the Rhone River.*

The big event was a Christmas party held for those who needed and appreciated it most: the orphaned children of the area and those children whose fathers were interned or working in labor camps in Germany. Many members of the battalion had a hand in the program. Capt. E. B. Connerat's historical notes from this period of our stay in France preserve some of the spirit of the occasion:

All members of the battalion saved and donated candy, some of which they received from home and some of which came from their PX rations. The mess sergeants in various ways saved flour, sugar, chocolate, milk and other necessary items for the preparation of cookies and hot chocolate. Many members of the battalion worked to prepare and decorate a large hall at the Caserne Viterioleries in which to hold the

party. Capt. H. C. Mauney, with 1st Sgt. F. Sykora, 1st Sgt. P. J. Hubble and 1st Sgt. F. L. Huston co-ordinated most of the work that was performed in connection



*The FFI blew this one off the track near Grenoble.*

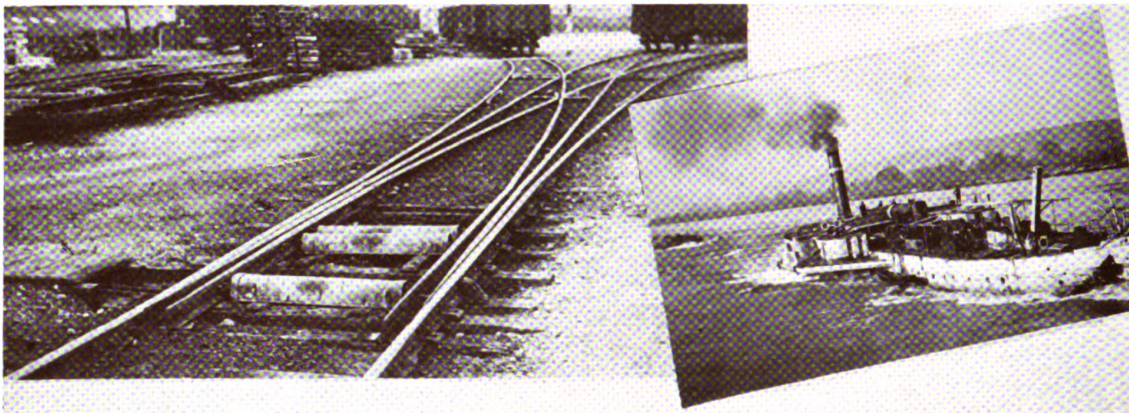
with the decorations, programs, refreshments, etc., with 1st Lt. S. P. Davis making arrangements for the musical program . . . Maj. Mullen was largely instrumental in securing a movie projector and three excellent short films, consisting of Christmas carols and animated cartoons which delighted the children immensely . . . The party was originally planned to take care of 600 children; however, it was estimated that 1,800 persons were present. Company "B" assisted in setting up heating apparatus, lighting effects, and other facilities around the hall for the comfort and convenience of all concerned . . .



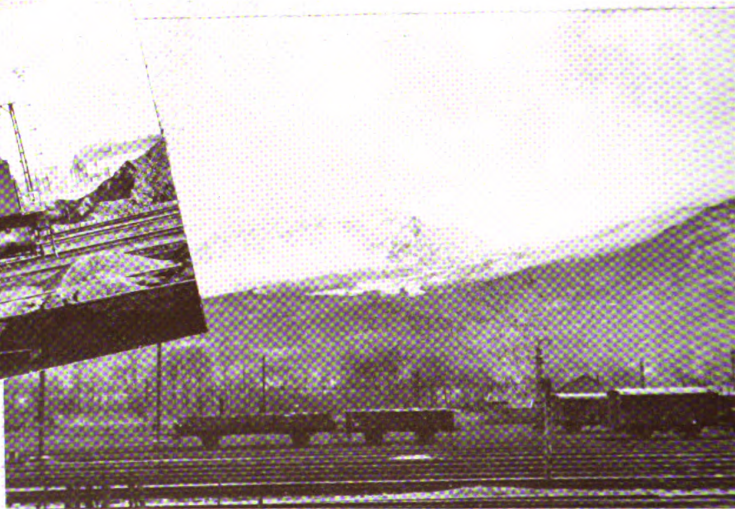
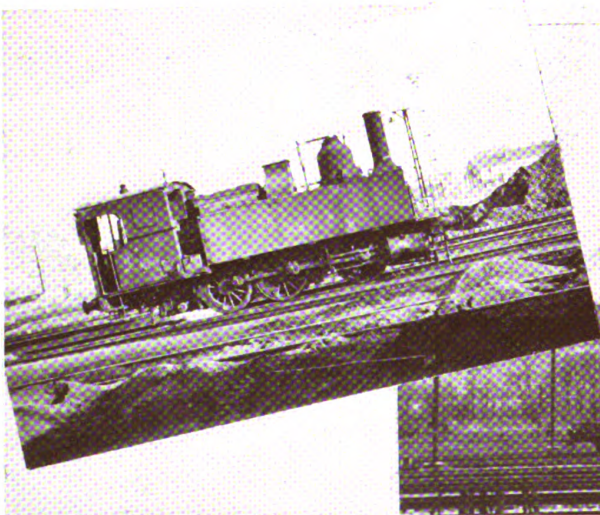
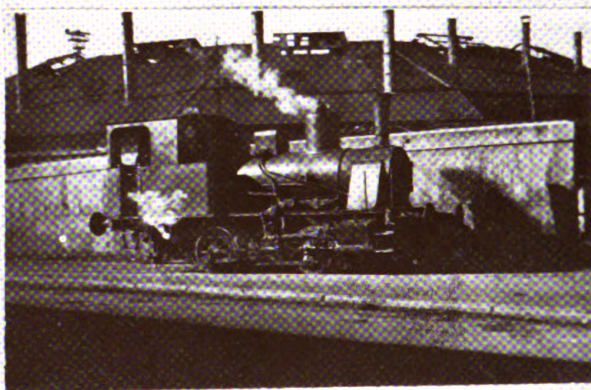
*Tracks flooded, France, Autumn, 1944.*

To give the party a modern touch, Santa Claus or St. Nicholas, as the little French guests shouted when he appeared, came riding into the party in a jeep.

The following day, civilian newspapers carried articles and pictures of the event. This came in for high praise and appreciation. General Azan, Commander of French headquarters



*A three-point switch, Dole, France . . . Tugboat on the Saone River . . . An 0-4-0 French goat . . . An 0-6-0 French goat at Lyon . . . Foothills of the Alps as seen from Grenoble, once one of the most strongly fortified cities in Europe.*



party, as well as three others which had been given at Amberieu, Grenoble and Valence, at Avignon, wrote to Capt. Beard, Company "A" commander:





*Lt. Hickey at Dole . . . Capt. Mauney's Christmas gift: our battalion insignia . . . Battalion adjutant in France . . . Result of 2½ years overseas . . . Supt's office crew, 1944: Sgts. Frovick and Ken Phillips, Pfc Bill Bajada, Sgt. Eph La Rocque.*









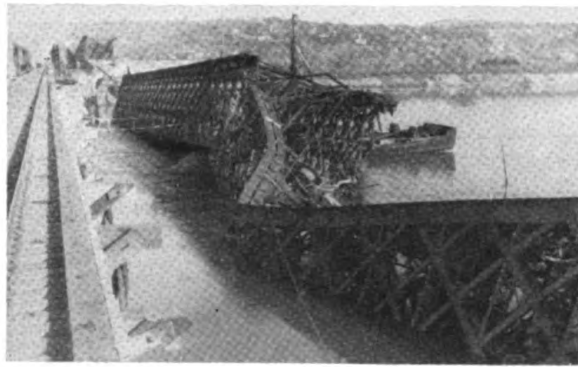
(P. 78, from top) Crane at work in bridge construction . . . Capt. Beard's trestle across the Rhone . . . Co. "A" at work on a big one . . . Co. "A" repaired it . . . (Upper right) A 727th bridge over the Rhone at Avignon . . . (Left) Another view of Co. "A's" 1400-ft. pile trestle over the Rhone.

You have responded with results that will help fill with joy the hearts of many unfortunate children who, up until now, have seen but the cruel side of life and none of its sweetness. This deed honors you as it honors all of America. We will not forget your kindness.

The Christmas parties represented perhaps one hundredth of one per cent of our activities in the southern France campaign. But 727th members may rest assured that the memory of this little series of parties will live in four French cities for years to come, long after our trains and engineering feats and complicated scheduling have been forgotten.

Of incidental interest is the fact that on this Christmas the battalion sent home 4,000 identical pieces of V-Mail—a Christmas card carrying the depiction of the ETO and the route of our wanderings, highlighted with the battalion shield insignia carrying our motto, *Semper in Tempore*. Capt. Wittekind had done a splendid job.

At Lyon occurred a small incident which seemed to indicate that perhaps the "Master Race" was ready to give up some of their ideas of world domination, held since the Munich conference with Neville Chamberlain and Edouard Daladier. Our prisoners in Tunisia had been a sullen lot. Clearly, they regarded North Africa as only a temporary setback. But in the "Caserne" at Lyon, Company "B" rode herd on a few dozen German prisoners who helped keep the place clean, took over KP duties, and assisted in the motor pool as mechanics on some of the minor repair jobs. At night, of course, they were locked up, but one evening the sergeant of the guard forgot to turn the key. The hours passed, and finally one Nazi walked



*The old and the new at Avignon.*



*Co. "A" men in lumbering operations near the Swiss border. The timber was for the bridge at Seurre.*



*Repaired bridge near Bourg.*

up to the sergeant and asked him if he didn't think it would be a good idea to lock them in. They liked it here, the prisoner said, and because no one was anxious to escape and rejoin a losing cause, they preferred being locked in.

January was relatively uneventful for the







## Christmas 1944

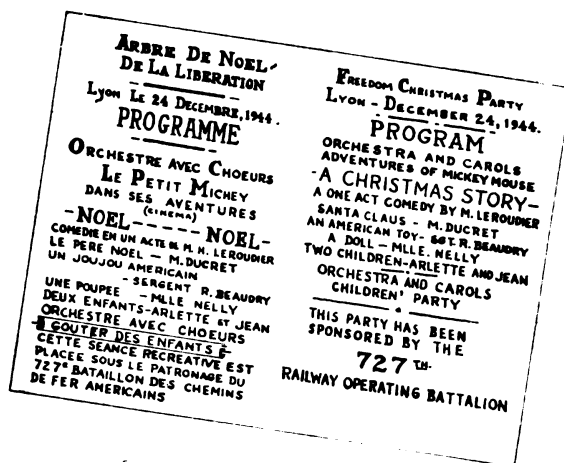
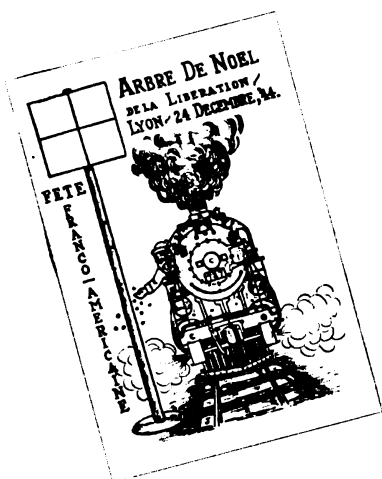


727th, although Company "A" was still hard at work on the Avignon bridge project. But in the following month, there was a change of CO's. Lt. Col. Okie was assigned to the 704th Railway Grand Division as CO and General Superintendent. Lt. Col. John M. Budd, Executive Officer of the 704th R.G.D., assumed command of the 727th.

Tonnage in the two months following the holidays was moving both north and south, with

*St. Nicholas greets his friends, the children of Lyon, at our Christmas party, 1944 . . . (Inset) Santa's "sleigh."*

special army troops being moved to Marseille for shipment to the China-Burma-India theater of war. Cross-hauling equipment from northern French ports to the south was becoming a bigger part of our duties. Company "B," in addition to other duties, was turning 13 USA locomotives a day at the Lyon roundhouse



*Our Christmas party program, Lyon, 1944.*

where they were stationed, while a portion of the company was sent over to the Valence roundhouse to relieve the 713th. The car shop platoon at Lyon took to the road many times to repair journals which were running hot on United States boxcars and flatcars. In the Dijon district for February, 450 trains carrying a total of 240,000 tons passed northward.

Late in March the rumor came that the 713th Railway Operating Battalion would be moving out of Marseille, and that their old sidekick, the 727th, would be taking over their territory. Planning for the move began immediately. We sent dispatchers, operators, car record clerks and chief clerks to Marseille to become familiar with the great Mediterranean port at which the battalion had disembarked months previously. It looked like a big job. From 300 to 400 miles of track would have to be supervised—important trackage running from Nice through Marseille to Lyon. With Marseille this meant taking over about 900 miles of main-line rails and an assortment of large and small ports, railheads and rest centers that now dotted this territory. We took over this area on April 5th. Although it was a big order for the battalion, we moved into it willingly.

Meanwhile, in Germany, the Ruhr had been penetrated at last by three great armies—the First, Third, and Ninth. Victory was coming

closer, and we read the *Stars and Stripes* closely for news from all fronts.

But the Army was still the Army. We were just getting settled into the new routine when a new order crossed the adjutant's desk:

*Effective 1800 hours, April 18, the 727th Railway Operating Battalion is relieved from any responsibility for Military Railway Service in France.*

Trains were ready and waiting on the 18th for the battalion to move up into Germany. By midnight on the 18th we were loaded and on our way, picking up some of our personnel who were stationed out on the line at Berre, Miramas, and other points en route.

We could not call our work in France our most exciting operation, for many of the dangers we had faced in other areas were missing. But from a railroading standpoint, it was a brilliant stand-out in our record of achievement. Our battalion had operated from the focal points of Lyon and Marseille over all of southeastern France. We had supervised the movements of more than 600 trains a month, and forwarded 428,000 net tons to the armies during the same period. It made good reading to hear that the Chief of Transportation listed the tonnage figures of all totals since D-Day in France, and that the First Military Railway Service, of which we

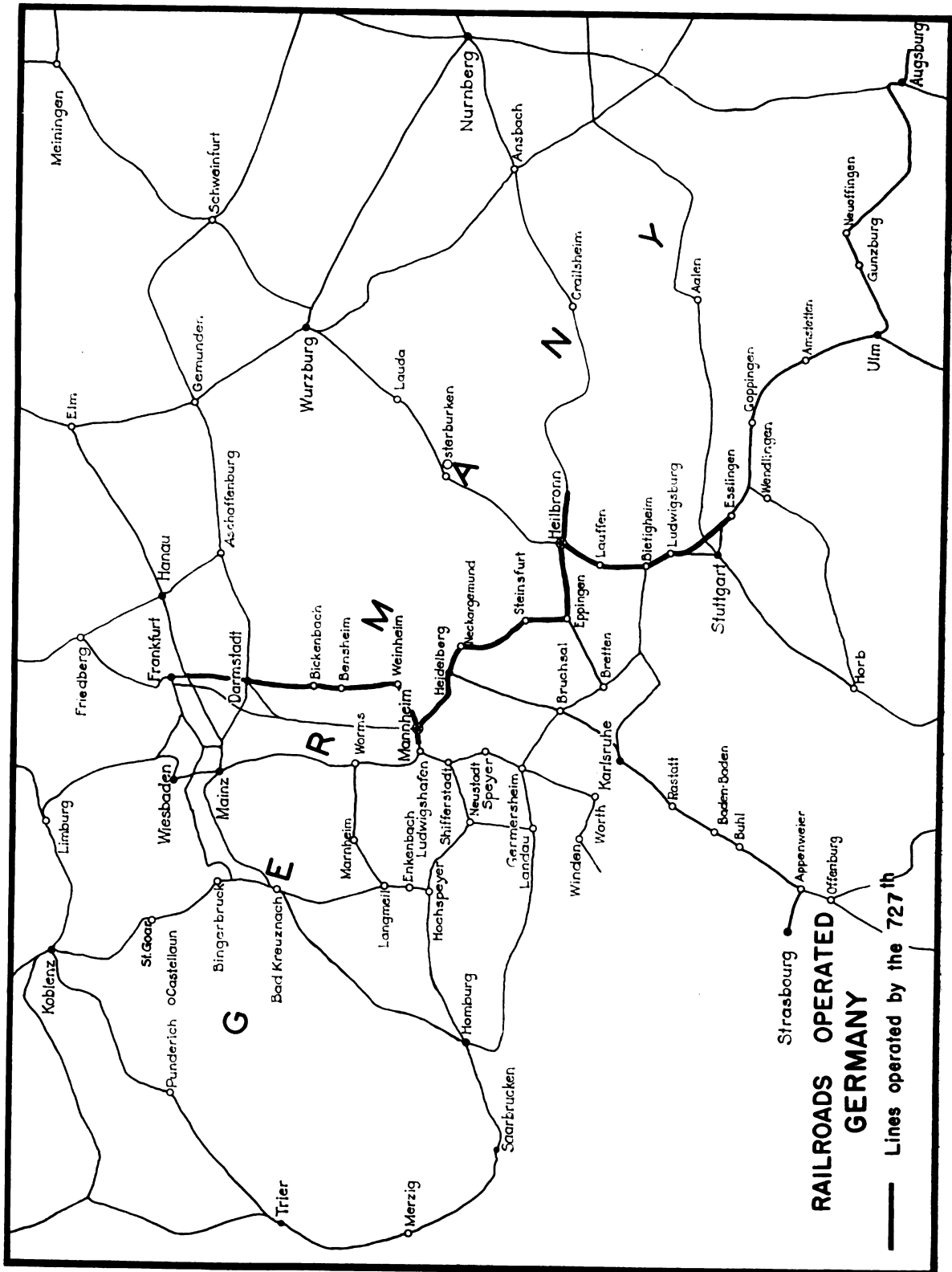


were a part, had exceeded tonnage figures of the Second MRS, even though the First worked over greater distances with only one third as many men. We had demonstrated that we could supply an army in the field, keep it rolling, and then, after the sound and fury of a campaign had died down, restore the lines to civilians as a smooth-running railroad system.

*Semper in Tempore* had developed into more

than just a nice-sounding Latin phrase on a railway battalion's insignia. It was the summing up of achievements that had not even been dimly foreseen when our 800-odd men were assembled in a hastily-thrown-together camp in Mississippi in 1942.

Up ahead were the green hills and dark rivers of Germany. Would we be fortunate enough to make that our last real wartime job?







# *Germany*

## THE END OF THE WAR

### *The 727th Rolls Over the Rhine*

APRIL 21st, 22nd and 23rd, in clear spring weather, our companies arrived at Ludwigshafen in Germany, a city situated on the Rhine, directly opposite the once-great textile manufacturing city of Mannheim. The two cities were connected by the "Ernie Pyle Bridge," which was completed soon after our arrival. Across this bridge most of our operating equipment moved. It was our mission to work out from Mannheim through Heilbronn, Ludwigsburg, and Stuttgart (where formerly was located Germany's most modern passenger station).

We were on the heels of the Seventh Army, which was rolling on in the direction of Munich. We stayed so close in one case that advance elements of the 727th were moving into Heilbronn while white flags were flying and the Army was still mopping up snipers posted at strategic points along the Neckar River.

It was a question at this time which armies of the Allied forces—Eastern or Western—would reach Berlin first. That question was settled by General Eisenhower's announcement that the Russian armies should have the honor of entering the capital of the Reich before American or British elements would be permitted to do so.

On the evening of April 23rd, the first train of Company "A's" equipment crossed the Ernie Pyle Bridge, and the following morning a test train went out to Heilbronn. It did not take long to open the line for business, in spite of many destroyed bridges, bombed yards and main tracks blocked with many abandoned trains. Gasoline and ammunition were soon moving over the rails to forward distributing points. Our reconnaissance parties also went out to Stuttgart, Darmstadt and Frankfurt preparatory to opening up lines radiating from these important centers. Frankfurt, which resembled our own Washington, D. C., had suffered heavily from air raids. Darmstadt was a terrible object lesson in what can happen to a big city which resists an army that is determined to get through it at any cost. Most of Darmstadt's big elms still shaded the streets, but back from the sidewalks, whole blocks of houses stood silent and desolate, their windows shattered by the big guns, and the walls emitting a characteristic odor of wet plaster that was common to all former German strongholds in which the fighting had been severe.

On May 6th, a line was opened to Ludwigsburg where a gasoline dump was established. The completion of the Neckar River bridge at

Stuttgart meant that a line would be open through Esslingen and beyond to Munich. In the course of the month the line was opened to Darmstadt and Frankfurt, where trains were interchanged with the 718th Railway Operating Battalion.

Col. Budd and Maj. Mullen had the problem of disposing of thousands of carloads of German freight which had been left in all stations and yards. Useless freight for the most part, freight that had to be assembled, classified, and unloaded so that the cars could be used to haul military supplies. Capt. Cary sent crews to stencil all captured equipment in order that there could be an accounting with our allies.

Company "A" had its work cut out for it. Allied air raids, which had helped the advance of our own armies, proved to be headaches for Company "A," in that bomb craters added to the amount of reconstruction work it was necessary to do in important yards. This company was also reworking bridges built by Army engineers who were not acquainted with the fine points of railroad bridge construction. Thirty-eight main line trains were rolling daily. Yard crews were kept very busy at Mannheim, Heilbronn and Ludwigsburg.

Bombing and demolitions had also made the work of our signal section difficult. Until lines were laid and put in working operation, trains were moved in fleets in a pattern that the 727th had first tried in Sicily at a time which already seemed long ago. Company "B" was working in the large, modern but now bombed out shops at Mannheim and Heilbronn, repairing engines that had been strafed and were therefore in need of heavy repairs and tests.

It gave the members of the battalion much amusement to learn that "back in the States" some schools were teaching that it was almost impossible to wreck a railroad by bombing because damage was so easily repaired. A few pictures of some of our crews working on the wrecked spans of railroad bridges might have changed those professors' notions in a hurry.

If it was impossible to wreck a road, it was only because we had "worked over" enough wrecked roads from Tebessa to Darmstadt to get the "know-how" to accomplish the job.

Since the Seventh Army's main supply bases were established at Mannheim, the 727th found itself in its usual hot spot of having to operate a railroad center whose functioning might well cause an army to succeed or fail on the strength of its supplies. More yards and railheads had to be opened up to serve dumps, and this meant that more switch engines, crews and yardmasters had to be provided. Fortunately, the 716th Railway Operating Battalion arrived on the scene, and handled operations from Bietigheim to Stuttgart and eastward.

An interesting development of the period was the work of reorganizing and rehabilitating former German railway employees, all of whom, of course, stated that they were "nicht Nazi!" By the 28th of June, we were able to place our entire assigned territory under German operation. The personnel figures were impressive: Mechanical, 1,250; Operating, 2,400; Maintenance of Way, 743, and miscellaneous German workers, 250.

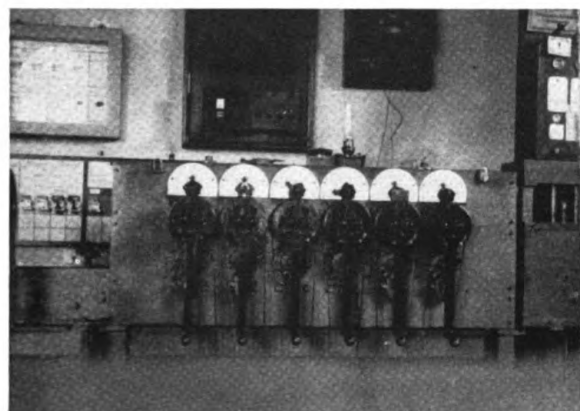
The problem of displaced persons became more acute the more deeply our armies penetrated into Germany. Their movements kept our rail lines loaded. Hundreds of these refugee and prisoner-of-war trains were handled. It was during this period that we came to appreciate the costume of a well-dressed Russian DP, which consisted of a flashy cap, a blue silk shirt looted from a German home, a vest (no coat, since a vest was regarded as "dressier"), pants, and boots. DP trains were something to see: men, women, children, dogs, sheep and personal effects in the cars and on top of the cars. Waving improvised flags they were for the most part happy groups, singing and playing musical instruments. On Russian trains there were bicycles which every Russian hoped to take back with him.

After their three or four years of labor in





*(Top) A German locomotive showing the swastika usually affixed to all their locomotives . . . (Center) Tower controls in Germany . . . Wreckage at Heilbronn.*



*(Right) A very skillfully camouflaged German 4-6-0 locomotive.*





*Bridge at Sarregemeine on French border.*



*Highway bridge on an autobahn.*



*(Left) Gasoline tank car at Heilbronn ignited by spark from synthetic German coal . . . (Center) The Hook . . . (Right) Some fine scenery at Heilbronn.*



*This Tiger won't strike again.*



*Railroad bridge at Karlsruhe, Germany.*

German prison and DP camps, very few of our men blamed the Russians, Poles, Italians and French who formed the main groups of German slave labor for "putting on a show" with any decent articles of clothing.

Nonfraternization policies came down through the echelons of command, but it was

difficult, sometimes, to observe them to the letter, particularly toward the children.

Company "A's" big job of this period was to build a bridge near Bietigheim with the co-operation of the 713th. A 110-foot, stone arch bridge, of which five spans and two piers had been knocked out by the Germans during their

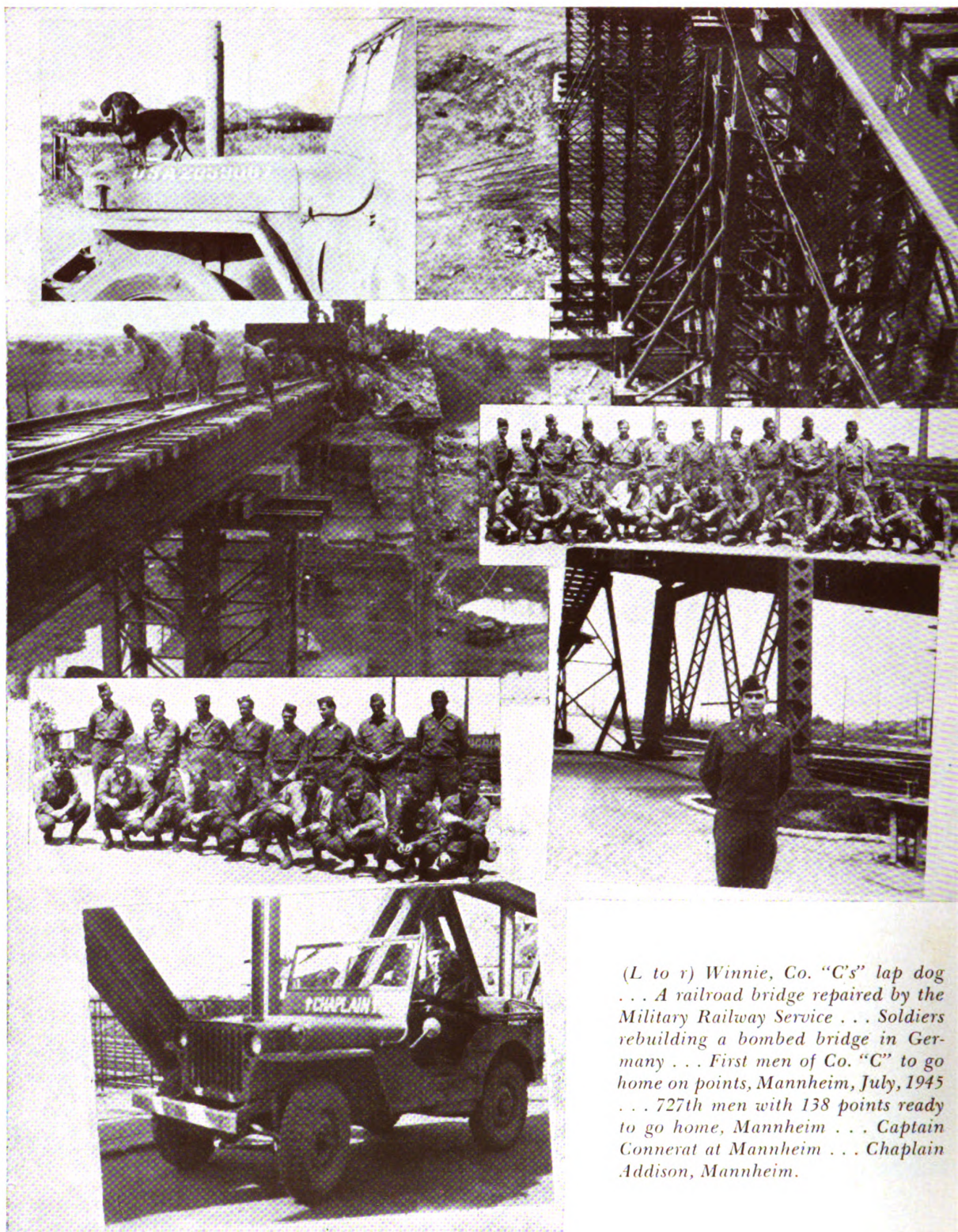




(Top) One line open and one to repair . . . Starting a new bridge at Mannheim . . . (Center) German flagman . . . The Rhine bridge at Mannheim . . . (Bottom)

Helping the Germans clean up a collision . . . Note lineman at work on pole . . . One line in and one line out, Stuttgart.





(L to r) Winnie, Co. "C's" lap dog . . . A railroad bridge repaired by the Military Railway Service . . . Soldiers rebuilding a bombed bridge in Germany . . . First men of Co. "C" to go home on points, Mannheim, July, 1945 . . . 727th men with 138 points ready to go home, Mannheim . . . Captain Connerat at Mannheim . . . Chaplain Addison, Mannheim.

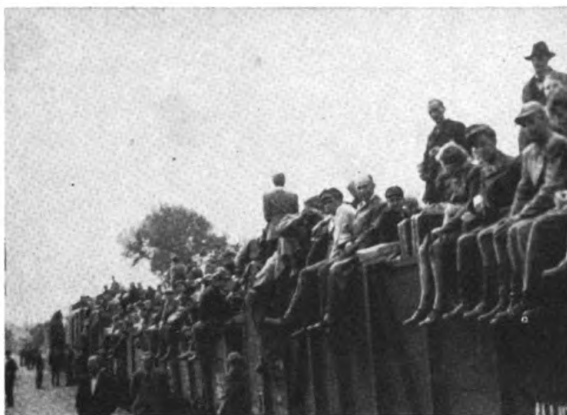


retreat, had to be reconstructed because the bridge was on the main line from Mannheim, Karlsruhe, Stuttgart and Munich. When the bridge was completed, traffic was again routed over this road, and the ticklish Heilbronn route became secondary.

In a period when "route order" discipline became a little more common under the victorious but tired Allied troops, it is worthy of note that the 727th completed operations in Germany without a reportable operating accident. To single out one company for outstanding achievement would be unfair to the three others. All established creditable records.

The point system was announced, and when the merit point system was adopted, it was discovered that over 90 per cent of our battalion had earned sufficient points to authorize a trip "back home." These points had been well earned by three years of overseas service with seven battle stars pointing up the accomplishment. We could call ourselves experienced, hardened railroad soldiers who were sure—but not cocksure—that we could take any section of any railroad in any part of the world, and after a brief period of orientation, run it as well or better than it had ever been run before.

The first week of May brought news that had seemed far away many times during the course of our military careers. On May 7th, the European part of the Second World War ended with



*Survivors of concentration and slave labor camps.*

the defeat of the Nazi armies and the collapse of Hitler's Germany. The end came on a wonderful spring day. Already, in Mannheim and out on the road, practical Germans were planting gardens that would yield enough food to get them through the hard winter that they sensed lay ahead for a conquered people. Highways and various cars of our trains were loaded with the homeless, the dispossessed, and the orphaned. Our most natural reaction to all this was to get home. After three years of war, it was a justifiable enough wish.

Soon after V-E Day, good news arrived for the battalion. Col. Budd announced that 125 of our highest-point men were to start for the States immediately, and 150 more would soon follow. Because of the shortage of railroad men in the States, it was decided to send us to the United States by plane. Most of the members of the outfit were flown home by way of Casablanca, Dakar, Natal and Miami. The first group of men who flew home beat the first 100-point men who traveled by ship. By September, almost all of us who had made up the original 727th Railway Operating Battalion were on our way home.

Lt. Perkins, the last CO of the 727th, and Lt. Hickey stayed after all of the original 727th had gone back home and until the battalion was deactivated at Mannheim, Germany by TSFET under General Order 112 of October 6, 1945.



*The tortured dead of Dachau Concentration Camp found when American troops overran the camp in the final campaign of the war in the spring of 1945.*



## *Homeward Bound!*



*Dreaming the long dreams of peace  
aboard the homeward bound "Santa  
Paula".*



*Men of the 727th on a transport com-  
ing home, July, 1945.*



# *In Retrospect*

The greatest war in history, which consumed more than three years of our lives as members of the 727th Railway Operating Battalion, made an unforgettable impression on each of us. We were molded by our experiences; mostly for the better, we hope. If this book has focused the more important experiences in clearer perspective it will have succeeded in its purpose.

It was not possible to record a great many of the details of surroundings, events and situations in which we found ourselves. Little things, such as the latrine sign: "Deposit Old Razor Blades Here" . . . the warm, flat taste of canteen water on practice hikes at Shelby . . . the interminable, monotonous stretches of North Africa . . . the hot, teeming towns where Arab jostled GI and the end of the war seemed ages away . . . the deep blue skies of Sicily . . . the cold, endless rain of Italy . . . the hills of Rome . . . the bright, carefully scrubbed thresholds in French villages . . . the pinched faces of hungry French youngsters . . . the deep, mysterious pine forests that ran

along the Rhine above Mannheim—these are some of the things we remember which could not adequately be recorded in this book.

We were a good railroad battalion, working for a good cause. We hope we left Europe better than we found it, freer if not as well-off as in prewar days. At any rate, we hope it will never again be necessary for us to go back there for the same reason.

We hope the peace we fought to obtain will endure forever. It will take work, patience, understanding, and sacrifices from us all. But compared with the sacrifices we saw in the war—sacrifices which cost the lives of many of our best comrades—no self-denial is too great if war can be averted, not only in our time, not only in our children's time—but forever!

The only type of order we want to follow in our future railroading days is not a special order, not a general order, but one that has the peaceful reassuring ring of pounding drivers and singing rails and the men who control them both:

THE TRACK IS CLEAR!!!



The 727th  
Wishes to express its deepest esteem to  
its hard-hitting and bitter rival, one  
of the finest RAILWAY OPERATING  
BATTALIONS ever organized—  
The 713th







# Our Complete Roster

## Headquarters Company

Okie, Fred W, Col, 700 Union Trust Bldg, Pittsburgh, Pa.	<i>Union</i>
Budd, John M, Lt Col, 332 S Michigan Ave, Chicago, Ill.	<i>GN</i>
Mullen, Carroll C, Maj, Hq 714th Ry Opng Bn, Ft Eustis, Va.	<i>USA</i>
Connerat, Edwin B, Capt, Hillcrest Apts, Court St, Lynchburg, Va.	<i>So</i>
Wittekind, Harold H, Capt, 2921 Altura Blvd, El Paso, Tex.	<i>SP</i>
Boles, James M, Capt, 324 S Mill St, Lexington, Ky.	<i>So</i>
Hackman, August E, 1st Lt, 1818 W Charles St, Grand Island, Neb.	<i>UP</i>
Lambert, Donald L, 1/Lt, 607 4th Ave, St Cloud, Minn.	<i>GN</i>
Baker, Daniel F, CWO, 1814 Jefferson Ave, Covington, Ky.	<i>C&amp;O</i>
Weaver, James E, WO (jg), Tallant Tfr Co, Hickory, N. C.	
Anderson, Claude C, Pfc, Flat Ridge, Va.	
Anderson, George E, T/5, East 8 Rockwood Blvd, Spokane, Wash.	<i>GN</i>
Asbell, Jesse, T/4, Shoals, Ind.	
Austen, Wesley M, T/4, 1120 B St, Fairbury, Neb.	<i>UP</i>
Azevedo, Myron J, S/Sgt, 213 Rose Ave, Pleasanton, Cal.	<i>Pac Cst Agg Co.</i>
Baird, Lyman R, T/4, 789 Holt Ave, Macon, Ga.	<i>GS&amp;F</i>
Baisden, Joseph A, Pvt, 410 3rd Ave, Watervliet, N. Y.	
Bajada, William, Pfc, 209 Academy Ave, Sewickly, Pa.	
Bartlett, Millard M, T/3, 1601 St. Paul St, Baltimore, Md.	<i>Clinchfld</i>
Bates, Burton L, Pfc, RFD #1, Emporium, Pa.	
Beaudry, Raymond A, T/4, Irasburg, Vt.	
Beck, Richard B, T/5, 520 E Henderson St, Salisbury, N. C.	<i>So</i>
Bennett, Charles C, T/5, 1510 Spring Garden Ave, Pittsburgh, Pa.	<i>Penn</i>
Bettes, Leo W, T/4, 584 E Main St, Box 271, Walled Lake, Mich.	<i>GTW</i>
Black, Chester, Cpl, Spenger, Ind.	
Blackshear, James M, Pvt, PO Box 651, Starke, Fla.	<i>Gulf Ref</i>
Bolin, Donald E, T/5, RR #1, Owensville, Ind.	<i>CCC&amp;SL</i>
Boskat, Charles A, Cpl, 26 Sanford St, Buffalo, N. Y.	
Brady, William T, Pvt, 59-87 57th Drive, Maspeth, Queens, N. Y.	
Brunner, Clair B, T/Sgt, 25 Taylor St, Waupun, Wis.	<i>CMSIP&amp;P</i>
Burich, John, Pvt, 2 Clay Alley, McKees Rocks, Pa.	
Byrnes, John J, T/4, Pawtucket, R. I.	<i>UP</i>
Campbell, William H, Pvt, Elks, Nev.	<i>SP</i>
Canzoneri, Joe A, T/5, 712 N Bunker Hill, Los Angeles, Cal.	<i>So</i>
Carlin, John H, M/Sgt, Route 2, Tuscumbia, Ala.	<i>GN</i>
Carlson, Albert L, T/4, 425 Bridge St, Crookston, Minn.	
Carrozza, Michael, T/5, 721 Segel St, Philadelphia, Pa.	
Cary, Herbert R, T/5, Box 985, Alturas, Cal.	<i>SP</i>
Casey, Leon P, T/5, 13736 Madison Ave, Cleveland, O.	
Catullo, Daniel A, T/5, 456 Cedarville St, Pittsburgh 24, Pa.	<i>Penn</i>
Ciesco, Joseph S, S/Sgt, 1737 Atchison Ave, Whiting, Ind.	
Consentino, John J, Pfc, Phillipsburg, N. J.	<i>NJC</i>
Copperthite, Robert L, T/4, 190 Coe Ave, East Haven, Conn.	
Craggs, Gerald E, T/5, 2995 Tompkins St, Gary, Ind.	<i>C&amp;IM</i>
Crane, James V, Pvt, 34 Junior Ave, Buffalo, N. Y.	<i>Buf Crk</i>
Cravey, Joseph G, S/Sgt, Gen'l Del, Auburn, Ala.	
Creighton, John C, T/4, 2116 11th St, Altoona, Pa.	<i>Penn</i>
Crist, William E, Pvt, 2333 Florence St, Blue Island, Ill.	
Crowder, Charles H, Pvt, Yuma Hotel, 366-6th St, Yuma, Ariz.	
Dahlkamp, Wesley R, T/Sgt, 1134 Patten Ave, Springfield, Ill.	
Dalton, Perry L, Pvt, 1374 Indiana Ave, Salt Lake City, Utah	<i>So</i>
Davis, Charles A, T/4, 1050 N Main St, Anderson, S. C.	<i>NYC</i>
Davis, Clarence E, T/3, 913 Lincoln Way, LaPorte, Ind.	
Davis, James R, T/4, 1304 E Second St, Pine Bluff, Ark.	
Derrig, Francis A, T/5, 2442 S Hicks St, Philadelphia, Pa.	
Dill, Stephen A, T/4, Rt #3, Olathe, Kan.	
Duncan, Robert L, T/5, 637 Oak St, Johnstown, Pa.	<i>Penn</i>
Duprey, Luther J, T/4, 15 Franklin St, Stillwater, Me.	<i>B&amp;A</i>
Ehry, Russell N, Pfc, 402 Maywood St, Philadelphia, Pa.	
Elliot, Jon B, T/5, 420 Ruxten St, Pittsburgh, Pa.	<i>Penn</i>
Erickson, Carl E, T/4, Montrose, Minn.	<i>GN</i>
Esquivel, Blas, Pvt, 838 S 6th St, Kansas City, Kan.	
Flegel, Herbert O, Pvt, Linton, N. D.	
Flick, Cleatus R, T/4, 17 W Ridge Rd, Hobart, Ind.	
Foley, Edward J, T/Sgt, Merrill, Neb.	<i>CB&amp;Q</i>
Fraday, Oscar D, Cpl, Route 8, Charlotte, N. C.	
Fratangelo, Paul C, Pfc, 251 Mansion St, Pittsburgh 7, Pa.	<i>B&amp;O</i>
Freund, Ralph L, Pvt, 1406 Sherman Ave, Pittsburgh, Pa.	<i>Penn</i>
Fritz, Ray E, Pfc, 4247 N Avers Ave, Chicago, Ill.	
Frovick, Edwin T, T/4, 2722 Crown Point, Omaha, Neb.	<i>UP</i>
Fulton, Robert C, T/5, 814 Wilson St, Gallitzin, Pa.	<i>Penn</i>
Geiger, Paul V, T/5, 311 N Clark St, Markle, Ind.	<i>Erie</i>
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# **EUROPEAN OPERATIONS** of the **727<sup>th</sup> RAILWAY BATTALION**

Africa 350 Miles	December 27, 1942 to July 12, 1943
Sicily 360 Miles	July 12, 1943 to November 20, 1943
Italy 450 Miles	November 20, 1943 to September 25, 1944
France 900 Miles	September 25, 1944 to April 18, 1945
Germany 225 Miles	April 18, 1945 to October 6, 1945

FRANCE



SPAIN

PORTUGAL

MEDITERR

Gibraltar

Oran

Algiers

Ouled Rahma

CHRISTMAS  
1942



ALGERIA

Metla







